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GOING BEYOND CARE, CONCERN, AND CONNECTION TO CREATE A  
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OF COMPASSIONATE CONNECTIVITY

A DISSERTATION

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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GOING BEYOND CARE, CONCERN, AND CONNECTION TO CREATE A  
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT OF COMPASSIONATE CONNECTIVITY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter One – Introduction	
The Cartographers Voices.....	1
The Road Less Traveled – Personal Story.....	3
The Children’s Voices.....	10
Theoretical Construct – Compassionate Connectivity.....	18
Research Questions Revealed.....	21
Chapter Two – Review of the Literature	
Voices of Illumination.....	23
Purpose of Education in the United States.....	24
Societal Changes Perceived to be Impetus for Change.....	31
Teacher’s Role in Caring.....	37
Models for Caring – Diverse Student Population.....	46
Conclusion.....	56
Chapter Three – Methodology	
The Roadmap to Discovery.....	57
Design of the Study.....	59
Participants.....	70
Data Sources.....	72
Data Analysis.....	74
Study Methodology.....	76
Chapter Four – Opening Doors	
Getting to Know You – The Teacher Participants.....	79
Oral Her-story Interviews – Stories of the Past.....	81
Oral Her-story Interviews – Stories of the Present.....	127
Oral Her-story Interviews – Stories of the Future.....	151
Chapter Five – Unraveling the Knot	
The Teachers Have Spoken – The Analysis of the Teacher’s Voices.....	157
The Teachers’ Voice Ring Clear.....	159
Chapter Six – Conclusions	
The Tipping Point – I Teach and by Teaching I Transform the World.....	189
Exploring the Possibilities – Future Study.....	217
Implications.....	218
Positing the Possibilities.....	221
References.....	222
Appendices	
Appendix A – IRB Approval.....	226
Appendix B – Informed Consent.....	227
Appendix C – Interview Questions.....	229
Appendix D – Questions and Quotes (Chapters 1 – 5).....	231

## ABSTRACT

Oppression of student's and teacher's voices exists on a multitude of levels. It is an international problem which Paulo Freire (1997) brought to our attention. Theorists from the United States have expounded on this oppressive theme through numerous literary works. In spite of those ideals espoused that teachers need a voice in important educational decisions (Dewey, 1916; Noddings, 1992; Fleener, 2002) it is not happening on a regular basis. Teachers have been marginalized and dehumanized by a 'culture of silence' that exists in our present educative system.

Many scholars show that we are falling back on teaching practices which concentrate on academic matters such as: reading, writing, and arithmetic. These ideals of schooling were crucial in the conception of education in what became the United States. These educative practices were developed when the purpose of education was quite different than that needed by the children who are growing up in the twenty-first century. The bulk of this research is primarily focused on the participants of a book study group reading Jane Roland Martin's (1992), *The Schoolhome: Rethinking school for changing families*. Her book is intended to address this issue of the teacher's voice and help them critically examine their practices particularly with regard to forming relationships with children who will become participants in a democratic society. The study looks for narratives that explain how these teachers experienced reading and discussing Martin's book.



For the purpose of obtaining data, a qualitative research design utilizing the phenomenological method and critical social science was used. The narratives of these teachers were analyzed for further clarification of the possibility for the existence and meaning of the theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity (a connection that promotes an atmosphere of just and compassionate behavior).

From the teacher participant's perspective, two themes surfaced: The participant teachers' voices have been oppressed by a number of factions. Three oppressor groups include: Politicians and laws mandated like the oft mentioned NCLB (2007). Administrators who have removed most of the creative teaching process and have insisted on the use of scripted teaching models in classrooms. Parents who have shown lack of support with discipline and homework. The second theme, expressed throughout the narratives, was a dogged determination to make a difference in the lives of children.

The need for action and change is implicit in their stories. Through the interactive process of telling a story meaning-making occurred and an understanding of reality obtained. Clearly the narratives point to that end. Every participant had a meaningful experience, albeit one participant's meaning was slightly different from another. This study provided them with insight into the need to improve relationships with the children they teach.

## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

### The Cartographer's Voices

For years scholars have been speaking and writing on the necessity of opening up the dialogue regarding our educative practices to allow a place for the teacher's voice. This problem has been discussed from an international perspective as well. Freire (1997) brought this problem to our attention. He shared the oppressive conditions that the peasant people of Brazil experienced due to their lack of access to education. He introduced theory regarding 'the culture of silence' that prevailed due to this oppression. His own story is one of suppressing the teacher's voice. He lived in exile from Brazil for twenty years. Freire's exile was brought about in large part to his philosophy of education which included the teaching of illiterate peasants.

The methodology he developed was widely used by Catholics and others in literary campaigns throughout the North East of Brazil, and he was considered such a threat to the old order that Freire was jailed immediately after the military coup in 1964. Released seventy days later and encouraged to leave the country... (Shaul, 1997, p. 13)

This invitation by the Brazilian government asking Freire to leave his homeland was an attempt to silence his voice because his philosophy posed a threat to the status quo.

Joan Wink (2000) provided this explanation for the term Freire used to refer to the science of teaching, "*Pedagogy* is the interaction between teaching and learning." She continued, "Pedagogy is not just about me teaching.

*Pedagogy* is the process of teaching and learning together. It is fundamentally about human interactions, the joy of playing with new ideas, and the challenge of integrating those ideas in the real world” (p. 59). This process described by Wink involves both teachers and learners, whereby sometimes the teachers are the learners and the opposite is also true.

From a national perspective this problem of the teacher’s voice and the need for inclusion in the dialogical process regarding our educative system has been studied repeatedly. Jane Roland Martin, Nell Noddings, and Jayne Fleener among many others have encouraged educators to open up the discussion through which change can occur in our educational system. Sadly, we have a long way to go in allowing their voice, that of the teachers, to have a say in important educational decisions.

Wink (2000) described the stories included in her book, *Critical Pedagogy* as her praxis. “My theory and my practice have joined together in the creation of the stories in this book. The stories reflect practice in classrooms that is grounded in theory” (p. 59). The stories I have chosen to share in this dissertation are from my own experiences as both student and teacher. My history has had an impact on the teacher and scholar that I have become through this process of continual learning, critical analysis, and personal reflections. I have personally experienced this problem of finding my voice and feeling its worth and my story is a perfect example that it still exists.

*I believe all suffering is caused by ignorance. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion, and elimination of ignorance, selfishness, and greed.*

Dalai Lama

### The Road Less Traveled

Stephanie

*I grew up in a place and time of privilege – not the kind of privilege that comes from having a great deal of money or a great deal of the things that money can buy, but the privilege of my experience was that of a most carefree childhood. We were the typical family of the 1950s: a mom and dad, four children and a dog named Stubby. The first house I remember my parents buying was quite small by today's standards. It was a 900 square foot house lovingly called "the cracker box" because it was shaped just like an oblong box of crackers. My parents purchased it with GI bill money. Sunny days were spent outdoors playing hopscotch with my younger brother and sister or cowboys and Indians with my older brother and his friends if they were in the mood to put up with me. Rainy days were spent indoors where I would become the teacher of my very own school. My younger brother and sister were my willing pupils. I taught lessons, read the stories, and made assignments based on my fantasy notion of what school was. Consequently, when it came time for*

*me to go to “real school” for kindergarten, I was not thrilled to say the least. Even before my first encounter, I remember my neighbor, who was an only child, saying in a very excited high-pitched voice, “Stephanie, I just can’t wait until school starts. Can you?” My response was in a lackluster monotone, “Yes, I can wait.” I most certainly was not excited about starting school. This was my attitude, despite the fact I had an older brother in school. I really did not want to leave the security of my home and family. I already knew how to read. At home, I was the teacher. I did not fully understand my lack of enthusiasm until many years later. Through the process of reflection about my own teaching experiences, comparing them to my childhood experiences, I have a deeper understanding of how strong my connection was to home and how little I felt the need to have that connection in school.*

*I trudged down the neighborhood streets each day, usually holding the hand of my older brother and my little next-door neighbor, Janice Sue, who just adored school. She always eagerly opened the door of our kindergarten classroom. She would also exuberantly remove my galoshes and put them away in my locker for me. I wish I could say, as the year wore on, I learned to enjoy going to school. That was not the case. I recall a day when Janice Sue was not going to school because she was sick. My brother and I walked to school together. I remember facing that humongous kindergarten door without Janice Sue. I reached up and gave the knob a half-hearted turn. It just would not budge. I turned around and walked all the way back home by myself. My mother had the most incredulous look on her face and asked me what I was*

*doing back home. I tried to explain to her about the door and how I could not get it open. She was not buying my assertion that I had tried and tried and the door must have been locked or jammed. Instead, my mom, told me to march myself right back up to that school and open that door to go to kindergarten which of course I did.*

Almost forty years later, I became a teacher and walked through the door of my very own classroom with an eager anticipation of all the scholarly activity that would take place under my direction. Wow! I was in for a surprise. I think I learned more than any of my students did that first year.

Many things happened that year which even at the time I knew were remarkable. At this writing, nearly ten years later, I have begun to understand how significant and how remarkable the classroom transformation was and continues to be. It begins to unfold gradually like a flower bud slowly opening up one petal at a time and becoming the beautiful rose that everyone admires so much. I felt fully prepared to teach. After all, I had recently completed my Bachelor's in Education followed immediately by my Master's in Education. Additionally, I had gained a wealth of knowledge and experience by raising three children who were all now attending college. What more was needed? I knew about pedagogy. My bachelor's degree had taught me much about the "science of teaching." In fact, I might have been a little better equipped than most new teachers starting out. Because of my master's degree in elementary school counseling, I knew about the "art of teaching." I was knowledgeable

about working with children from diverse backgrounds and all manner of behavior disorders.

My studies to become an educator trained me well in lesson plan writing, completing paperwork and following procedures. Additionally I received textbook advice on child behavior. I began teaching with ambitions of educating our next generation, infusing creativity, and building intellectual purposefulness in every child's life. Somehow, the just and compassionate feelings I once had for the individual became secondary to the "tools for teaching" and that just did not seem right. My personal inclinations were to find a way of working where kindness and competence go hand in hand with learning. As a teacher I have found that an ever-increasing number of children are becoming even more at risk of educational failure. These children are living in homes that are being distorted because of the fathers and mothers who are consumed with trying to eke out a living. Moreover, some of these children are at increased risk because they are poorly housed, undernourished, neglected, subject to the affects of other's drug abuse, and have few positive role models. During the years I have spent teaching and counseling in schools of extreme poverty, I have gained an understanding that has made me rethink my purpose for teaching and allowed me to express my just and compassionate feelings for the individuals I teach. Unfortunately, I experienced all too often in the classroom and beyond that impatience and hostility are prevalent. These experiences and my reflections have forced me to challenge other adults' negative opinions of

children. They have also become the catalyst for my construct of Compassionate Connectivity.

Much of Martin's (1992) work in, *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*, focused on the differences in the composition of social relationships, which have occurred over the last fifty plus years. The basics of our educational system were previously thought to be the three Rs of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Educational aims are not that different even today. I believe this continued emphasis being placed on the acquisition of linguistic and logical mathematical skills is to the detriment of allowing time for other areas of learning interest to be explored. Martin (1992) proposed that these three Rs are not the basics, which will instill the essentials for becoming successful members of society. Children deprived of the curriculum from home may never acquire the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values essential for membership in our society. She stated:

In calling the three Rs our basics, we assume that children have already acquired at least the rudiments of culture with a small c.

Only if this learning is imperiled does it occur to us that it is the product of practice, patience, and directed effort. (30)

Martin's (1992) vision of a Schoolhome would include *the back to basics* domestic curriculum. The focus of education would shift from placing primary values on money and entrepreneurial activity to an emphasis on domesticity and the three Cs of care, concern, and connection. She made a clear case for shifting the focus from teaching the three Rs to learning the three Cs. The



basic premise is that when both parents go to work, children are left behind and no one has taken the time to fill in the gaps of learning very *basic* concepts for living in our world. Martin's conceptual terms of care, concern, and connection put forth the challenge to turn the schoolhouse into the Schoolhome. Thus, creating an environment where all children can learn in an atmosphere in which education, affection, safety, trust, and diversity can coexist to create a moral equivalent of home.

Educators clearly perform an extremely important function in providing the individual with the skills needed to compete in a society. However, educators are also responsible for the production of honorable and compassionate behaviors in the individuals they teach. Reaffirming the three C's from Martin's *The Schoolhome* with Compassionate Connectivity is an example of a theoretical construct that gives classroom relationships new meaning and provides a catalyst for transforming our world. Compassionate Connectivity is the ability to imaginatively participate in another's emotions or feelings in order to understand them better. This encourages just and compassionate behaviors which allow acknowledgment of one another as essential components and exemplary elements of a greater humanity. Compassionate Connectivity is a theoretical construct that takes relationships to be a primary building block of reality in the production of just and compassionate behavior. This behavior reaffirms sensitivity towards others and aids in transforming schools and thereby our world.

This kind of personal engrossment in the life of another is central to Noddings' (1984) theoretical concept of caring. In her book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Noddings proposed comprehending the other's reality. She asserted that feeling what he feels, as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the caring one. "For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly" (Noddings, 1984 p. 16). Additionally, Noddings suggested that we envision a school system built on the idea that different people have different strengths, and that those strengths should be cultivated in an environment of caring.

Martin (1992) developed her ideas for improving the school environment from the premise that schools need to become more caring, concerned and connected to the children they teach. She supported this view throughout *Schoolhome* and authenticated this need with the changing family structure. Martin challenged her audience with the notion that educators must not focus on who to blame, but instead to look for solutions to the challenges our children and their families face. Martin posed a vital question:

The question for us as we watch the procession of people [fathers and mothers] move each morning from private house to public world is not, Who can we blame? We have to ask ourselves here and now, What are we as a nation, a culture, a society going to do about the children who are left behind? (p. 4)

As Martin shared her feelings regarding young children being cared for outside of the home, she related that the curriculum that was once taught in the home is now lost. She encouraged schools to take ownership of the curriculum of care, concern and connection, and bring it into the classroom. She envisioned classrooms that are transformed by educators who embrace these three Cs. In her words, “Weaving a web of human connection is to acquire a cognitive understanding [of the three Cs]” (107).

The experiences I am about to share occurred well before my introduction to Martin (1992), Noddings (1992), and others. It was, during my reading of these works as well as Sapphire’s (1996) *Push*, Ralph Ellison’s (1947) *Invisible Man*, and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher’s (1996) *A Matter of Black and White*, that reflecting on my early teaching experiences began to bring to fruition the significance of the events that occurred in my first year of teaching. I was assigned to teach a transitional first/first grade class, so quite naturally I assumed I would be doing ALL the teaching. Wrong! Even at that young age, those children had experienced things that I never had. They knew about hunger, danger, filth, poverty, and abuse first hand. The more I attempted to teach, the more I learned from these wise six and seven year olds. In my small classroom, were children similar to Precious Jones in *Push*, the Invisible Man, and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher.

My little Precious was raised in filth by a mother who had many children from many different men. Those men were “scary” and “lazy” according to the girl, and some did not care what they did to harm her. She, like Precious, didn’t

quite see the necessity of learning math, or anything else for that matter. How was any school subject going to help her either now or in the future? Her mother, like Precious' mother, did not encourage going to school or acquiring an education. This first grader's mother needed her at home to see after her needs, the needs of her present man, and the needs of numerous younger children.

The Invisible Man in Ellison's (1947) story was an adult in college as the novel opened and he did not have a name throughout. My Invisible Man did have a name – Tyrone. He was the youngest of three children being raised by an alcoholic grandmother. His mother was in jail for the use and abuse of crack cocaine. However, at the very tender age of six, Tyrone was exposed to the kind of racism which the adult Invisible Man heard about from his grandfather and learned about from his own life experiences. It was the kind of racism that treated the Invisible Man and Tyrone as less than real, less than human, simply because of their race or skin color. At the beginning of school Tyrone was told by another young man in our class, Manuel, in a very loud voice, "My dad said you can't be my friend. I can't play with you at school, and you can't come to my house because you are black." Imagine my shock, embarrassment, shame, and heartbreak as I tried to take this statement and understand where it was coming from and where it was going. I can only imagine that this little invisible man, Tyrone, must have had some inkling of the feelings Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher had as she trudged up the stairs in her law class to take her seat in the chair marked COLORED. "In back of the last row of seats was a single large wooden

chair behind a wooden rail...I did not look about, just walked straight ahead and up the levels to the chair” (145). The young man who made the statement is Hispanic and was truly only repeating the words of his father who I am sure had experienced his own form of racism.

Showing tenacity similar to that of Sipuel Fisher was one of the transitional first grade students, Jamal . He was a very wise, albeit a very young man. In comparison to others in the class, Jamal’s home life was stable. He lived with his mother who was in her early teens at his birth. They lived with his grandmother who was very attentive to the needs of both. Even at his young age he had faced obstacles like those Sipuel Fisher (1996) had faced. Jamal had attended another school for kindergarten and his teacher had recommended placement in a transitional first grade instead of regular first. I must admit I had my doubts about this placement even on the very first day of school, as he showed an eagerness to learn and qualities of leadership beyond his years. Jamal began reading before the first month was over. I met with his mother to discuss his progress and asked if she knew why his kindergarten teacher had recommended T-1. Her response was disheartening. She said, “I don’t think Jamal’s teacher liked him very much.” Jamal was resilient though. He did not quit because he was not treated fairly. Instead he worked even harder to love everyone and be loved by everyone. If someone needed help, including the teacher, he was the first one to be ready. If someone was hurt, including the teacher, he was the first to offer sympathy. If someone needed

protection or defending, including the teacher, he was the first one to protect or defend.

Jamal exemplified the concept of caring that is so important in the creation of the Schoolhome environment. That year we all learned from him. I saw students in the class slowly change toward each other. We were transformed by caring into a moral equivalent of home, and we didn't even know when or how it happened. How can I be so sure that is what happened to us when I hadn't even heard of the concept of a Schoolhome until very recently? As Martin's (1992) work, I began to think about those defining moments from that first year of teaching in my first grade home. There are far too many defining moments for me to include. I have provided a narrative account of three.

*As part of a lesson on the early settlers and Native Americans, I decided we needed to have our very own classroom feast. Our lessons included everything from making table decorations, laying a tablecloth with proper place settings, and making our own pumpkin pies, including mixing the dough from scratch. The rest of the meal was prepared in crock-pots and roaster ovens, so not quite like a meal prepared at home. The children however, were thrilled and very complimentary. Saying things like, "Ms. Holcomb you are the best cook! You are even better than my grandmother!" I have to tell you the meal was not that great. What was so great is that we all sat down together and shared a time of true fellowship. In my estimation, we all earned an A for that assignment.*

*Another moment permanently ingrained in my brain is when we studied holiday traditions from different cultures. Our class was privileged to have a volunteer from a Jewish synagogue. She brought things to share and talked about her family's holiday traditions. When she left that day, someone asked me if that is how we celebrated in my home. I did not go into a lot of detail recognizing that most of my students were used to very little. Instead, I focused on the part that is important to me, the close family time. I spoke about how much we enjoyed being together and how I looked forward to that time when my own children, who were away in college, and family from near and far would gather. One of my students raised their hand and said in a very sorrowful voice, "Ms. Holcomb I would rather be here at school with you." Several others joined in with like sentiment. My thoughts at that moment were: Oh, how dreadful. On the one hand that they did not have a home where family and friends would gather in camaraderie. Oh, how happy on the other hand that they felt that sense of belonging to each other, resembling a family at school.*

*Tyrone's story is one that demonstrates how a baby doll changed an entire class by Compassionate Connectivity. The school was located in a large urban school district in one of the most crime-ridden areas of the city, where poverty, abuse, prostitution, drugs and gang related activity prevailed. Before the school year began, I looked over my class roster and noted seven Hispanic students, six African American students, and four Caucasian students. My classroom was very scantily equipped and as I began to purchase supplies for the coming year, I searched high and low for a Hispanic baby doll and a black*

*baby doll. Unfortunately, I was unable to find a Hispanic doll but soon found a black doll.*

*On the first day of school, Tyrone, one of my transitional first grade students, entered the classroom and immediately began to bully the other children. He punched one in the stomach during our get acquainted activity. At afternoon recess, he stomped on a little girl's fingers, which were wrapped around the monkey bars. By the end of that first day, at least three children were hurt and crying due to bullying actions of Tyrone. As soon as school let out, I consulted with his kindergarten teacher from the previous year. She told me about Tyrone. He was born a crack-cocaine addicted baby. He and his two older sisters live with his alcoholic grandmother and an uncle because Tyrone's mother is in prison for her continual drug addiction. During his kindergarten year, Tyrone was receiving half-day treatment from a mental health facility. Among many other things his teacher shared with me, I remember her saying he bit a complete stranger, during a class field trip to the fair. I knew I had my work cut out for me. I also knew that in-spite of all the negative events in his life Tyrone came to school looking sharp every day. His clothes were pressed neatly and he wore good smelling cologne. The next day I greeted Tyrone at the door – telling him how handsome he looked and commented, "Oh my, what is that wonderful smell?" He gave me a hug and told me it was his uncle's cologne. I strongly suspect he splashed a little extra cologne on every morning after that, just to please me. Things improved ever so slightly after that, but the bullying problems continued to occur, thankfully at a less alarming rate. One*



afternoon in the early fall, as I was preparing the homework packets, something happened that changed our classroom entirely. My classroom design included a number of interest centers the students choose from for the last twenty minutes of the day, if they finished their math. The last twenty minutes was often the only opportunity I had to grade papers, write notes, and prepare the homework folders for the day. Consequently, this was one of my busiest times. Tyrone had chosen the home center that particular afternoon. He was pushing the baby doll around in the stroller. He approached the table where I was working and said, "Ms Holcomb, my baby is crying." I looked at Tyrone and thought about all the things I still needed to do – knowing that even a minute could make the difference between finishing my task and sending home the student's folders. I considered saying, "Oh, well I guess you need to go rock your baby." However, I am grateful that instead, I took his baby doll in my arms, patted it on the back and said, "There, there, baby, it's okay, you don't need to cry anymore." As I turned to hand the baby doll back to Tyrone, he gently took the doll, did not say a word, but our eyes and hearts made a connection. His eyes said to me, "Ms. Holcomb loves babies. She does not care about their skin color. Ms Holcomb loves me." I wish I could say, from that moment forward, my classroom was perfect. What I can say is that moment was pivotal in the transformation of our classroom community that slowly unfolded over the rest of that school year. This type of transformation was achieved because the children felt supported, nurtured, and connected, not only to their home communities, but also to the teacher and the educational setting.

*Although, this final moment happened over ten years ago, I still see it all as clearly as if it happened yesterday. That same year, in the early spring, we had a guest speaker who came to talk to my class about manners. The boys and girls enjoyed the lesson. They each had an opportunity to role-play using manners in numerous situations. Before our guest left the room, I noticed Manuel with his head down in his arms sobbing. I wanted to wait for a quiet moment when everyone was busy to talk to him but the others would not have it. "Ms. Holcomb, Manuel is crying." "What is wrong Manuel?" As I walked in his direction, I reminded them to give him some space and let him have his time to cry. I put my hand on his back and he sobbed, "My father is always mean to me." I tried murmuring comforting words. He lifted his head and cried, "No, Ms. Holcomb, you don't understand my father hits me all the time." I looked up to see the class reaction to his statement. I looked into the shocked and not so shocked eyes of 17 other students. One of whom I suspected might have been abused had the look of "Oh, so I am not the only one!" I continued to talk to Manuel softly and told him we would need to go talk to the school nurse. He came back to class later that afternoon as we were watching a video. I had already talked to the children about how Manuel needed us all to be his friend and not to ask a lot of questions. As he sat down in his chair and I looked on, tears began streaming down my cheeks. Tyrone had slipped his arm around Manuel's shoulder. There they sat, side-by-side without a word displaying the true meaning of caring. Tyrone did not care that he could not go to Manuel's house because he was black. Manuel did not care about anything but the*

*comfort of having a true friend. Some people come in our lives and quickly go, like waves briefly touching the shores. Some people stay for a while, and give a deeper understanding to what is truly important in this life. They touch our souls. We gain strength from the footprints they leave in our hearts, and are forevermore transformed.*

My experiences have led me to conclude that the solution to a harmonious classroom, where optimal learning can take place, does not stop with the teacher and how much he/she cares. I realize this is only the first, yet most important step. In fact, my experiences as a school counselor for five years have brought me to the conclusion that this notion of the teacher “caring” for the students as individuals is an essential element to each child’s feeling of significance or importance as part of the larger classroom community.

In *The Challenge to Care In Schools*, Noddings (1992) envisioned a school system that embraces the notion that we must accept our students as individuals with different areas of strength. These strengths should be cultivated in an environment of caring and not the typical school environment of competition. Noddings asserted that schools of today can be rejuvenated by the realization that caring is the foundation of all successful education (p. 27). Noddings (1992) stated, “Students will do things for people they like and trust. This is a fact that we must acknowledge” (p. 36).

Kids learn in communion. They listen to people who matter to them and to whom they matter. The patterns of ignorance we deplore today are signs that kids and adults are not talking to

each other about everyday life and the cultural forms once widely shared. (p. 36)

While Noddings (1992) acknowledged the merit in the vitality of Dewey's (1963) idea of continuity, whereby educational experience must be connected to the child's personal experience and be a broadening of present interest to enhance future experience or growth and development, she pointed out the significant difference in the composition of social relations since Dewey.

Many children suffer instability in both family and community life.

More mothers work outside the home, neighborhoods are less personal, schools are larger, and recreation is often passive – connected to personal experience only by chance and presented with no consideration of what Dewey called “growth.” (p. 64)

This is an antidote to the notion, put forth by too many in the education field, that schools faced with pervasive deterioration of purpose concentrate on academic matters. Noddings (1992) proposed that “schools should be committed to a great moral purpose: to care for children so that they, too, will be prepared to care” (p. 64).

It is my strong belief that by nature we are all caring individuals. When we demonstrate Compassionate Connectivity in our human interactions, we build trusting relationships. Continuing to encourage the children to feel connection, we build on this foundation of trust. Having a trusting relationship with our students is essential in the production of just and compassionate behaviors. This connection reaffirms our sensitivity towards others and aids in

transforming our schools and our world. This narrative illustration of my first year teaching experience is intended to show how Compassionate Connectivity has provided me with an opportunity to exemplify the significance of my work and transmit its meaning far beyond my classroom walls. These acts, which encourage self-reflective cognizance, have allowed me to become more effective in reaching the goal of educating the whole child.

The ultimate long-range impact contained in Compassionate Connectivity evokes a cyclical effect of care, concern, and connection, reaching every child, and eventually an entire society. The cyclical message of modeling Compassionate Connectivity by care, concern and connection transcends cultural adversity and awakens acts of Compassionate Connectivity within the children I teach. This serves as evidence that the three Cs can become everyone's business.

The teachers I know, including my daughters, all seem to love their profession but have this aura of extreme frustration and fatigue. They have all the necessary knowledge, all the necessary teaching tools, and all the necessary drive and ambition to be successful, but something is just not working as it should. By the end of each school day, the students are fractious and the teachers are exhausted. When things are not going the way they should, it is time to take a good hard look at the problems and reach within ourselves for solutions. In each of my years of teaching, it has been a privilege and source of great joy to take a widely diverse and difficult group of students and be instrumental in the process of transforming them into a widely diverse

group of children who demonstrate a classroom of Compassionate Connectivity.

It is through the reflective process, I began while completing the coursework for a PhD in Educational Studies, that I have seen the significance of these experiences in a new light. As I read Martin's, *Schoolhome* to complete the requirements for the course "Schooling for Social Justice" I began thinking that I could have written this. My thinking was not in the smug sense that I knew it all. It was more in the sense that I knew what Martin was trying to convey. I *knew* that I had stories to tell about my teaching experiences that could perhaps shape the perceptions of others and transform any classroom into a place where Compassionate Connectivity prevailed and all children could find their niche in the schools of today. In retrospect, this process of realization helped me to see that my stories are important enough to voice. Something significant can be shared and learned from my willingness to see the events of these classrooms in a new light. In addition, I began thinking about other remarkable teachers and the stories that they could share which could inform the dialogue previously written about necessary changes in the educational process.

To provide support for my conjecture that Compassionate Connectivity can exist in every classroom, I plan to test this construct in real-life situations. My proposal for research is to begin with a group of dynamic early childhood educators and conduct a book study of Martin's, *The Schoolhome*. Through the course of this book study, I will elicit the narratives of these teachers, which will

help further clarify the existence and meaning of my theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity. I wonder if another group of teachers would have a meaningful experience by reading and discussing Martin's *The Schoolhome: Rethinking school for changing families?* As teachers how do they experience this set of readings? Through reading and discussion, what happens to them or what doesn't happen to them?

## CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Voices of Illumination

Reading books for my doctoral coursework was a jumping off point for me. The books I read helped me find direction for research. However, from those beginnings, references to other writers were discovered who also needed to be read and evaluated as research. It seems this research is a never-ending story, as one thought or idea somehow becomes connected to another concept that needs be explored. To date, my studies have included 45 books written by a diverse variety of authors: ones who are both teachers and lecturers, ones that are tied directly to the field of education, and others who lean toward the field of psychology. Books which are auto-biographical and fictional were utilized. Research theories garnered from five dissertations and numerous journal articles on the topics of empathy, care and compassion have become part of my studies that shed additional light on the construct of Compassionate Connectivity. For the purpose of this literature review, four articles from a diverse variety of literary journals are included. In addition, I have included information and ideas from several handbooks and manuals which were written to assist the classroom teacher in areas of children's moral or character development.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature and determine what research has been conducted, or evidence revealed, pertaining to education and the purpose which will serve all members of our current society. The world's society in general, and the American society of the United States in



particular, have experienced an unquestionable metamorphous in the last century. In addition, this literature review will analyze the current understanding of compassion and the term “care” as it relates to two different components of any school. While pursuing the research of available literature, four themes that give relevance to my study emerged. The first theme explored ideas regarding the purpose of education in the United States and educator’s shifting views on that concept. The second theme deals with the societal alterations that are perceived to be the impetus in revolutionizing the way education is enacted. In order to clarify compassion, the final two themes are focused on the idea or act of caring, which will be treated as two different questions to be answered: what is the teacher’s role in caring to promote Compassionate Connectivity? and what models for caring will be necessary in a classroom with a diverse student population to promote Compassionate Connectivity? These four themes will be explored and analyzed in the literature review to follow.

### **What is the purpose of education in the United States?**

*I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. All reforms which rest simply upon the law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon change in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile....But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move....Education thus conceived marks*

*the most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience.* (Dewey, 1897)

John Dewey (1890) perceived education as an experimental, child-centered process. Marie Montessori (1907) viewed education as an extension of the learning that takes place in the home as the child experiences their environment. Both were outstanding thinkers in educational reform during the first half of the twentieth century. They both developed laboratory schools in order to perpetuate their educational philosophies, which were based on the psychology of childhood.

Dewey (1902/1990) wrote *The Child and the Curriculum*, wherein he described his laboratory school for educational experimentation of applied psychology.

It is not a normal school or a department for the training of teachers. It is not a model school. It is not intended to demonstrate any one special idea or doctrine. Its task is the problem of viewing the education of the child in the light of the principles of mental activity and processes of growth made known by modern psychology. (p. 96 - 97)

*Democracy and Education*, also written by Dewey (1916) presented his theory of progressive education. In his view, education should not be based on an historical approach – learning the lessons of our fathers in order to become an educated member of society – but rather on each child's experiences to create a desire for acquiring new knowledge in relation to their interests. The term he

used to describe this type of learning was “growth.” Dewey (1997) explained growth as “the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation” (Chapter 4, p. 4). In other words, growth is being able to adapt actions based on the results of previous experiences. Dewey also used the word “habit” as an expression of growth that enables us to learn from experience. He stated, “A habit is a form of executive skill, of efficiency in doing. A habit becomes an ability to use natural conditions as means to ends. It is an active control of the environment through control of the organs of action” (Chapter 4, p. 6). Habits, in the sense that Dewey used to describe the word, are active, immediate, assertive, insistent and dominant. He proposed that habits are formed and dispositions developed within the process of trying and discovering or experimenting with the world. Dewey’s educational philosophy tended to focus more on the child learner as a social individual who develops out of Dewey’s vision of a democratic society that perpetuates the just and inclusive perspective. The presence of dependent and learning beings is a stimulus for nurture and affection. “It certainly was a chief influence in forming habits of affectionate and sympathetic watchfulness; that constructive interest in the well-being of others which is essential to associated life.” (p. 5)

Montessori (1967) tended to focus on the child’s individual growth. She developed a system of education, still used in many parts of the world today, based on “free discipline” and “free choice” by children. Montessori began by applying her system in Rome, Italy to schools which were established for slum

children. These schools were called *Casa dei Bambini*, meaning literally children's houses, which evoked the idea of familiar surroundings.

The family environment found in the *Casa dei Bambini* was the setting for developing three essential points or characteristics of Montessori's educational method. The first essential point is characterized by the importance attributed to environment. Montessori (1983) told of the existence of the child's inner sensibility which is particularly important during the sensitive period. She explained:

There is a long sensitive period, lasting almost to the age of five, which gives the child a truly prodigious capacity of possessing itself of the images of its environment. The child is an observer who through his senses is actively absorbing images. (1983, p. 60)

The second point, which has provoked much interest and controversy, focused on the role of the educator. Montessori (1983) asserted, "Of course, the word education must not be understood in the sense of teaching, but of assisting the psychological development of the child" (p. 28). The final point is characterized by a respect for the child's personality, which Montessori (1983) stated "[is] carried to a degree unattained in any other educational method" (p. 117).

Montessori's school differed from Dewey's in a number of ways; perhaps, most notable was that the first *Casa dei Bambini* was not a place created for a determined educational experiment. Clearly, her school was not created for scientific educational research. Rather, "it provides an example of an initial discovery which had all the features of an 'unknown' presenting itself before it

had been recognized, of a trivial fact able to open illimitable horizons” (p. 120).

Montessori’s theories are used by Martin as a basis for her own theoretical construct of developing a Schoolhome where care, concern, and connection are the foundation pieces to the achievement of that goal. Noddings took the construct of Care and developed it to explain her theory of education which focused on care in five different realms: care for people, animals, things, ideas, and the environment. Martin (1992) philosopher, author and educator, asked several thought-provoking questions in her book *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. She presented a critical question: What are we going to do [in regard to our educational system] about the children who are left behind when both parents cross the bridge to work? Martin asked, as well as provided a framework for understanding many additional contemplative questions throughout, including:

- What radical changes are needed in schools to fill in the gaps not being met at home?
- What are the ways we can find to help all our children feel at home in school and the world?
- How can we educate the next generation to live in the world together if they are not taught by people doing just that?
- How can the Schoolhome counteract our culture’s negative assessment of domestic endeavors?

Many of the insights provided by Martin are further discussed in subsequent themes.

Noddings (1992), philosopher, educator, author, mother, and a proponent of compassion and caring, envisioned the main aim of education as being the production of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. Her book, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, provided a framework for understanding how the ethic of care she introduced in *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethic and Moral Education* can be incorporated in the school day. Noddings (1984) called wanting to care “genuine” or “natural caring;” she likened the love of a mother for her child as a primary example. “Memory of our own best moments of caring and being cared for sweeps over us as a feeling – an ‘I must’ – in response to the plight of the other and our conflicting desire to serve our own interests” (p. 79).

“There are moments for all of us when we care quite naturally. We just do care; no ethical effort is required. ‘Want’ and ‘ought’ are indistinguishable in such cases” (p. 81). Ethical caring draws its methods from natural caring and, in itself, is not an inferior way of being. Noddings (1984) emphasized that, “An ethic built on caring strives to maintain the caring attitude and is thus dependent upon, and not superior to natural caring” (p. 80). She (1992) expressed concern that far too many of our students are being marginalized in our current educational system.

Instead of preparing everyone for college in the name of democracy and equality of opportunity, schools should be instilling in students a respect for all forms of honest work done well. Preparation for the world of work,

parenting, and civil responsibility is essential for all students.

(Introduction, *xiv*)

A rationale for adding a component to the present day curriculum based on themes of Care was presented by Noddings (1992). She indicated societal changes are the main impetus for her challenge, “Schools should be committed to a great moral purpose: to care for children so that they, too, will be prepared to care” (p. 64). She continued with:

Schools cannot accomplish their academic goals without attending to the fundamental needs of students for continuity and care...social changes over the last forty years have left many young people without a sense of continuity and with the feeling that no one cares. Therefore, although schools should continue to reflect on and pursue many purposes, their first – their guiding purpose – must be to establish and maintain a climate of continuity and care. (Noddings, 1992, p. 64)

Dewey, Montessori, Martin, Noddings, and many others indicated changes that have occurred in our society as the driving force behind the consideration for educational reform. Albeit the changes described by Dewey and Montessori revolve around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those changes were instrumental in bringing about the changes Martin and Noddings put forth as the motivating factor for their proposals of reforms needed in our current educational system. These societal changes will be addressed in the second theme established for this literature review.

**What are the societal changes that are perceived to be the impetus for change in the way education is enacted?**

*What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. (Dewey, 1990)*

Dewey and Montessori conducted most of their research and produced most of their early work as the century was turning from the 1800s to the 1900s. This time coincides with the Industrial Revolution which had a direct impact on the work of both.

In *The School and Society*, Dewey (1900) acknowledged “the modification going on in the method and curriculum of education is as much a product of the changed social situation” (p. 8). He attributed these educational changes, as well as the changes in types of commerce and industry, as an endeavor to meet the requirements of the new society. Dewey does not dwell on social changes. However, he does discuss the change that is foremost in his mind:

The one that overshadows and even controls all others, is the industrial one – the application of science resulting in the great inventions that have utilized the forces of nature on a vast and inexpensive scale: the growth of a world-wide market as the object of production, of vast



manufacturing centers to supply this market, of cheap and rapid means of communication and distribution between all its parts. (p. 9)

Furthermore, Dewey (1900) claimed “that this revolution should not affect education in some other than a formal and superficial fashion is inconceivable” (p. 9).

Martin (1992) related “In 1899, John Dewey told a Chicago audience that the Industrial Revolution had irrevocably transformed the American home by removing work from the household” (p. 7). According to Dewey (1900), “At present, concentration of industry and division of labor have practically eliminated household and neighborhood occupations – at least for educational purposes....It is radical conditions which have changed, and only an equally radical change in education suffices” (Dewey, *The School and Society*, 1900/1990, p. 12).

Although living and working in a different part of the world, Montessori recognized the changes in society brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Unlike Dewey, she did not place all her focus on the results of work being removed from the home to factories. Instead, her theoretical constructs regarding education were shaped by the realization that the removal of one or both parents from the home was a direct result of the Industrial Revolution. Martin (1992) shared some of Montessori’s words as she addressed the Roman Association of Good Building, which was incorporated to acquire, remodel, and administer the tenements of Rome. The association had purchased fifty-eight houses and began a process of transformation on them. Martin related:

Upon completion of these projects, however, the authorities found themselves facing an unexpected problem: the children under school age living in the new housing were running wild while their parents were at work. In Montessori's words, they were becoming "ignorant little vandals, defacing the walls and stairs." Deciding to establish a school in each building, the Association turned for help to Montessori....Convinced that these children were neither being cared for properly nor learning what they should at home, she designed the Casa dei Bambini.

(p. 9)

In her book, *Cultural Miseducation: Toward a Democratic Solution*, Martin (2002) points to three major changes in society which have impacted the way families function as educational agents. The first societal change noted by Martin was when the Puritans deliberately transferred the attainment of basic cultural goals to a function of the schools, thereby increasing schools purpose beyond vocational education. The family was the main agency of education in the forming of U.S. society and where family left off local community and the church fulfilled the need. In addition, families in the colonial period were made up of single households that included parents and young children, as well as grown children, cousins, nieces, nephews, and quite often grand-parents. School during this period played a minor role. Our local communities have changed dramatically since those earlier days. "The results of urbanization and industrialization in the U.S. are a highly mobile population which tends to pull family and community apart" (Martin, 2002, Chapter 2).

Secondly, Martin noted that manufacturing work prior to the Industrial Revolution was primarily carried out in homes then changed to being done in factories. As a result, children were no longer being exposed to the educative benefits of industry, responsibility, imagination, perseverance, and powers of observation they once learned while participating in the manufacturing process at home.

The third change Martin mentioned is the transformation of family structures brought about when women entered the work force. The end of the twentieth century has been fraught with radical changes which have once again transformed the American home.

Martin (1992) shared these statistics:

As late as 1960 the norm of the two-parent household in which father goes out to work and mother stays home with the children accurately represented 70 percent of American families. But by 1986 only 7 percent of our families consisted of a male breadwinner, a female housewife, and dependent children. (p. 6)

Martin (1992) contended that it is just these societal alterations which have occurred over the last few decades that have made it imperative to change the way education is enacted. She questioned what radical modifications of school suffice in an era when the lives of so many children have been impacted by societal change. "The best answer I know is to turn the American schoolhouse into a moral equivalent of home in which the three Cs take their rightful place in the curriculum of all, and joy is a daily accompaniment of learning" (p. 41).

Noddings, (1992) a contemporary of Martin's, found an inadequate educational response to the enormous social changes that have occurred since World War II. She noted the sluggish response of schools to technological changes but also found schools have generally ignored vast societal changes.

We have seen changes in work patterns, in residential stability, style of housing, sexual habits, dress, manners, language, music, entertainment, and perhaps most important of all in family arrangements. Schools have not responded in an effective way to these changes. (p. 1)

As Noddings (1992) suggested, the most important change -- that of family arrangements -- can readily be found in today's typical classroom. Many children are from homes in which both parents work for a living, and many others live with single parents. An ever-increasing number live in blended families with half-siblings or "temporary siblings unrelated by blood, some who have foster parents, and some who really have no parents at all" (p. 1).

The prevalence of television in most homes in the United States, even those of the poorest families, has also changed the way students of today view the world. According to Noddings (1992), "On a given day, most students in any class have watched murder, assault, love-making, war-making, and/or competitive sports on television the previous night" (p.2). One side affect of this avid television viewing that Noddings did not address is the students who do not receive adequate rest which has a profound influence on learning. Many preschoolers begin watching several hours a day of television programming at

about age two. Healy (1992) reported that by the ages of 3 to 5 – the height of the brain’s critical period for cognitive and language development – estimates place viewing time of the average child at 28 hours per week. Children, from lower socioeconomic status, have an even higher television viewing time average. One of the most obvious and disheartening results is the drastically curtailed playtime. Healy included a study by Dr. Bernice Cullinan of New York University. Cullinan questioned a large group of typical fifth graders about the average amount of time they spent reading outside of school. The results were that 50% read 4 minutes a day or less, 30% read 2 minutes a day or less, and 10% read nothing at all. Instead, this group is spending an average of 130 minutes per day watching television. Neal Postman (1982), author of *The Disappearance of Childhood*, cautioned that the media (television, records, radio, and movies) have reduced the role of the family in determining the morals and sensibilities of young children. He stated, “The structure and authority of the family have been severely weakened as parents have lost control over the information environment of the young” (p. 150). He included a reference that Margaret Mead once made to television as the Second Parent, “by which she meant that children literally spend more time with television than with their fathers” (p. 150).

Referring to the numerous obstacles faced by our students, due in large part to the changes in society, Noddings (1992) encouraged educators to restore the moral purpose of schooling. She suggested rejecting the claims of

too many educators that schools should concentrate on academic matters. She referenced Tyack & Hansot, (1982) for this suggestion:

Some have even said that the schools were designed for academic purposes, but these people are plainly wrong. At least they are wrong historically if we look at the establishment of schools in the United States. Moral purposes have, until recently, been more important than academic ones, and the latter were often frankly designed to serve the former. (p. 65)

### **What is the teacher's role in caring to promote Compassionate Connectivity?**

*I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized. (Ginott, 1972, p. 16)*

Ginott's entire book is filled with vignettes that describe compassionate ways to respond to a number of teacher and student situations. In the Epilogue, Ginott included a note to the teachers on the first day of school from their principal, a survivor of a concentration camp. The note told of the horrors he witnessed which were committed by educated people. He closed with the

following request: “Help you students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane” (p. 317).

Leo F. Buscaglia, a Professor of Education, lecturer, and renowned author has written several books exploring the dynamics of loving relationships thought to be essential for life, health, and happiness. In the Foreword to his 1984 book, *Loving Each Other: the Challenge of Human Relationships*, Buscaglia described it as a “book about love, tenderness, compassion, caring, sharing, and relating – the most vital of human behaviors. Without these qualities life is empty...” (p. 11). Buscaglia (1982) has also written a book, *Living, Loving & Learning*, which was written specifically for educators about the subject of love and its place in the educational setting. As a supporting thought for his thesis that love is not something that happens to us spontaneously but rather is learned, he mentions a book, *Crisis in the Classroom*. Buscaglia described the author, Leonard Silberman, as a great sociologist and a great psychologist. Silberman was given a three-year Carnegie Grant to find out what the current state of education in the United States is.

He [Silberman] concludes that considering that in America education is for all, we’re doing a pretty damned good job when it come to reading and writing, arithmetic and spelling. We’re pretty good at that. But we fail miserably in teaching individuals how to be human beings. (p. 5)

Buscaglia (1982) stated, “The study of love has brought me to the study of life. To live in love is to live in life, and to live in life is to live in love (p. 83). He defined the word compassion in this way: “To help you accept others whose ways may be different from yours, with gentleness and understanding, as you move with them or through them or around them on your way.” In addition, Buscaglia concluded that “maybe Leo Rosten was right when he said, “the purpose of life is simply to count, to matter, to have it make some difference that you lived at all” (p. 82). He encouraged classroom teachers to keep this feeling of love for what you do and the children you educate in the forefront everyday, or go do something – anything – else.

In spite of their critics, contemporary philosophers and scientists like, Carl Rogers, A.H. Maslow, Margaret Mead, Clark Moustakas, C.S. Lewis, and others have persisted in affirming that a society devoid of basic human need is doomed. Over the past forty years, a vast amount of scientific literature has been amassed which, as Buscaglia (1984) told us, “proves that relationships *do* matter ... to sustain a productive life” (p. 12). Parker Palmer (1998) in his book *The Courage to Teach* adeptly made this point, “The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts – meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self” (p. 11). In his book, *Freedom to Learn*, Carl Rogers (1969) called this connection “empathic understanding.” He included a number of examples where teachers are using this methodology. Rogers commented that, “these examples are more than enough to show that the



facilitator who cares, who prizes, who trusts the learner, creates a climate for learning so different from the ordinary classroom that any resemblance is 'purely coincidental'" (p. 111). He supported the idea that significant learning is increased when "empathic understanding" is exemplified by the teacher. He proposed, this "sensitive awareness of the process of the way the process of education and learning seems *to the student*," (p. 111) establishes a climate for experiential learning which is self-initiated.

Dewey's laboratory school epitomized his idea of school as a small cooperative society where children can solve problems with the use of self-initiated, experiential learning. Dewey (1900/1990) suggested in *The School and Society* this vision for our classrooms and schools:

When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instrument of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious. (p. 29)

In her book, *Dewey's Laboratory School: Lessons for Today*, Laurel Tanner (1997) took a retrospective outlook of Dewey's educational theories about schooling, curriculum, and teaching. Tanner explained Dewey's 1890s innovative approach to school improvement. "The teacher's role was to improve instruction by gearing it to children's growth stages...working out a curriculum that harmonized with and facilitated growth was the problem that occupied the teachers from the beginning" (p. 163). In his book, *The Schools*

*Our Children Deserve: Moving Beyond Traditional Classrooms and “Tougher Standards,”* Alfie Kohn (1999) presented views that align with Dewey’s ideology of a progressive education. He made a case for educators to allow students the opportunity to make decisions about their own learning, thereby increasing interest in learning and encouraging them to try more difficult tasks. He theorized that allowing choice of educational endeavors would help students to gain confidence in their abilities. (p. 233). Throughout his works, Dewey emphasized that character is formed and not a separate thing or subject that can be taught like math or reading. In an article to the Rotarians, Dewey (1934) wrote about two changes schools could make in regard to moral training. First, Dewey shared that schools needed to be structured as communities. Also, rather than a focus on discussion of moral education which he equates to “virtues and vices in the abstract” (p. 58), a more effective approach is to allow its growth from specific situations in children’s experience. Dewey explained:

The more the school is organized as a community in which pupils share ... the more surely it will lead to the problems of larger social groupings outside the school. Moreover, such organizations would give practice ... in methods of cooperation and would require the assumption of definite responsibilities on the part of young people. (p. 58)

Montessori (1983), in *The Secret of Childhood*, explained her theory of the “intelligence of love” like this: “The whole labour of life, which fulfils itself subject to its laws and brings into harmony, reaches consciousness under the

form of LOVE” (p. 99). She theorized the child’s self-realization is manifested in him/her through love. Montessori conjectured that, “Indeed it is a love of his environment that we may envisage the irresistible urge, which, throughout the sensitive periods, unites the child to do things” (p. 99). As mentioned in a previous theme, Montessori considered the teacher’s role to be passive, so as not to interfere with a child’s natural curiosity or love for learning. To discover the child and make possible his liberation is the aim of Montessori’s new educational philosophy. The teacher then becomes a facilitator of the process of development of the child. With this statement, she made her idea of the teacher’s role clear:

Now the adult himself is part of the child’s environment; the adult must adjust himself to the child’s needs if he is not to be a hindrance to him and his is not to substitute himself for the child in the activities essential to growth and development. (p. 109)

Martin (1992) suggested the role of the teacher is to model the ideals that we want our students to emulate. If we are to teach the next generation to learn to live and work together, teachers must do just that. Educators can learn from relevant research and their own successes and mistakes how to teach children to value themselves and others. Martin (1992) envisioned a new curriculum that will encourage our students to be participants in life and not merely observers of life. Her suggestion of a Schoolhome does have a common core for teachers to utilize; it is composed mainly of attitudes, skills,

and values as opposed to bits or bodies of knowledge. Based on her intensive study of Dewey and Montessori, Martin concluded, the Schoolhome must have a domestic curriculum, taught in an affectionate climate. In addition, the teacher will have to try out new combinations of collaborative and individualized learning based on the needs of each child. The teacher in the Schoolhome is charged with teaching the three Cs of care, concern, and connection as an essential part of every lesson, everyday.

Noddings (1992) did not deny the importance of acquisition of knowledge, but encouraged those who teach to understand it is best attained in relations of care. It has been well documented that educators spend more hours in a day with children than do parents. Noddings suggested that students will want to study courses that are encouraged or supported by people they care about. While she supported the idea that it does no harm to suggest or invite particular courses of study, Noddings did suggest that “we [educators] need to entrust students with important choices concerning their own education. Indeed helping them to choose intelligently *is* education, and we must reject the pernicious notion that some areas of study are intrinsically more valuable than others” (p. 171). Noddings (1984) expressed this thought in this way:

The special gift of the teacher, then, is to receive the student, to look at the subject matter with him. Her commitment is to him, the cared-for, and he is – through that commitment – set free to pursue his legitimate projects. (p. 177)

Elaine Jaltema (2002), in her thesis entitled *Leading Students Towards Caring and Moral Wisdom in an Elementary School Classroom: Theory and Enaction*, took an extended look at an elementary classroom and the methods educators can implement with the children they teach to improve the development of moral wisdom through caring. One of the techniques she suggested to reach this goal is the use of self-labeling a strategy of Popov's (2000) Virtues Project: "Teachers should encourage students to think of themselves in morally positive terms (such as honest and trustworthy) as people tend to act consistently with their self-image" (p. 83).

Kohlberg's (1981) cognitive-developmental approach explains how children's moral reasoning is advanced through exposure to a level of moral reasoning that is slightly higher than their own, specifically in the area of justice. He advocated the use of hypothetical dilemmas to generate discussion and more advanced moral reasoning. Kohlberg's detractors charge that reasoning, demonstrated in response to hypothetical moral dilemmas, does not necessarily translate into moral behavior. As Krebs et al. (1997), in the journal article entitled, *The Forms and Functions of Real-Life Moral Decision Making* ascertained, the ability to empathize or perceive another's point of view does not inevitably lead to caring – it can be self-serving by allowing people to see how others will react to their choices. The research findings of Krebs et al. (1997) suggested that people's real-life actions are generally based on promoting social relations, maintaining favorable self-images and justifying action that is purely self-serving. The implication of this research is that moral

dilemmas elementary age children face themselves would serve better for encouraging discussion and advancing moral reasoning. According to Healy (1990), the author of *Endangered Minds*, children need role models for problem solving. She wrote, "It is not intuitively surprising to learn that teaching children to talk through problems helps them with higher-level learning and mental organization -- as well as with managing their behavior" (p. 182).

Jayne Fleener (2002), in her book *Curriculum Dynamics-- Recreating Heart* cautioned of the dangers of considering students as things and curriculum as a thing. If we do that, we are reducing the art of education to teaching a "thing" about "things" so the "thing" that is measured will be sufficient. In this sense of understanding, recreating heart occurs when we realize we are teaching children each with their own unique sets of understanding where a set curriculum that barely scratches the surface of knowledge is not only insufficient – it is inappropriate. Fleener described her metamorphosis in teaching this way:

My teaching radically changed when I stopped thinking of student, learning, knowledge, teaching and schooling as "things" from a productive perspective....This change in what I believe to be most fundamental, namely that students are complexes of relationships rather than things, living within individual and social contexts... [has caused] a shift in thinking about "things" to thinking about "relationships. (p. 80)

How do we make that shift from thinking of our students as "things" to thinking about them as "relationships"? The last part of Fleener's book

instructed us on ways of thinking about our thinking so each of us can guide that change in a personal way. To do this might require adopting wisdom from our Native Americans. Reading a chapter from *The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader* allowed me insight into an approach to studying nature which did not require conquering. The approach of observing closely and becoming aware of all aspects of growing things in nature can be applied to our students. Fleener also encouraged us to change our language or how we talk about schools in order for significant change to occur. Communication is the medium of meaning that pervades social institutions. Fleener stated that, "seeing schools as learning organizations and helping them develop their adaptive potentials will provide the *change of aspect*" (p. 143) necessary for schooling to move beyond modernist origins and change the way we interact with and see our world. She encouraged educators to open up the discussion by which change can occur.

**What models for caring will be necessitated in a classroom with a diverse student population to promote Compassionate Connectivity?**

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that... [this nation] will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet*

*land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. (King, Jr. 1963)*

Nearly a century ago Dewey (1916) articulated his ideals for a democratic society. Democracy begins with a community where individuals are connected in a way that allows the cooperative sharing of interests and abilities. Democracy itself grows when all members of a community participate in dialogue about different beliefs, values, and actions, and attainment for the good of society. Dewey applied these principles to his theories on the ways education would best be enacted.

In his book, *Savage Inequalities*, Johathan Kozol (1991), educator and author pointed out the inequities which exist in the American educational system. He traveled about the country to gather information about the extremes of wealth and poverty in U.S. schools. He reported:

What startled me most – although it puzzles me that I was not prepared for this – was the remarkable degree of racial segregation that persisted almost everywhere. Like most Americans, I knew that segregation was still common in the public schools, but I did not know how much it had intensified. The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* 37 years ago, in which the court had found that segregated education was unconstitutional because it was “inherently unequal,” did not seem to have changed very much for children in the school I saw. (p. 3)



Kozol (1991) was very troubled by what he discovered as he stated, “none of the national reports I saw made even passing references to inequality or segregation. Low reading scores, high dropout rates, poor motivation – symptomatic matters – seemed to dominate discussion” (p. 3). He continued, “In public schooling, social policy has been turned back almost one hundred years” (p. 4). Most of Kozol’s book dealt with the inequities in school funding, which largely contributes to the inequalities in our public schools. He also included descriptions of the neighborhoods and realities of these students from impoverished districts ring true to children in classrooms in any large urban area, even today.

To understand better the real lives of many students, Kozol’s (1995), *Amazing Grace: the lives of children and the conscience of a nation*, is a good book to read and study. In it, he described the tragedies that so many children in America suffer every day. Kozol told the story of one young boy, David, who lived in a homeless shelter, in the South Bronx, with his sister and mom. David’s mom learned she carried the AIDS virus at the age of 39. He and his sister did the best they can to take care of their mother who is very ill. In one conversation with Kozol, David made this comment about his thoughts on the power of God: “He is not powerful enough to stop the evil on earth, to change the hearts of people” (p. 23). Kozol questioned David about the meaning of his words, “The evil on the earth.” David responded:

Evil exists...I believe that what the rich have done to the poor people in this city is something that a preacher could call evil. Somebody has power. Pretending that they don't so they don't need to use it to help people – that is my idea of evil. (p. 23)

Buscaglia, Rogers, Martin, Noddings, and others have exemplified through many works that educators do have the power to change the outcomes for all students including those, who like David, come to school with many strikes against them. Teachers, who are not afraid to show their human side while building connections with students, can make a difference in any classroom. Rogers (1967), in his book, *Person to Person*, stated the following:

When the teacher is a real person in his relationships with students, and feels an acceptance of and empathy toward his students; then an exciting kind of learning occurs. Students go through a frustrating but rewarding process in which gradually responsible initiative, creativity, and inner freedom are released...The nature of these changes has to some extent been investigated empirically.

(p. 62)

In her book, *The Absorbent Mind*, Montessori (1967) recognized that a new classroom environment with constructive activity is the only answer for the education of any child. In this type of environment a child is allowed to construct itself normally and show true personality (p. 203). Montessori

described a phenomenon in which a child is allowed to construct their own character with absorbing learning activities and will thereby begin to concentrate and attain what she called normality. Montessori (1967) stated, "We find this phenomenon repeated unfailingly in all our schools, with children belonging to different social classes, races and civilizations" (p. 204). The essential element is for the task to arouse such an interest that it engages the child's whole personality. In this way, not only is character bolstered, but the child's intellectual life becomes unquenchable in its search for knowledge.

Martin (2002) proposed the idea that different curricula can in fact prepare people for the same role in life. Equality of education does not mean that the same curriculum is required for all. She supplied three reasons for rejecting any policy that would insist on a single school curriculum. The first reason a same curriculum for all policy should be rejected is that students blessed with interests and abilities which do not fall within the selected guidelines may find it impossible to associate to any course. According to Martin, "When the opportunities for choice are diminished in education, boredom, inattention, and a lack of motivation create the need for external prods and sanctions" (p. 125). Secondly, when the prescribed school curriculum is the same for all, individual interests and abilities get left out and difference is perceived as deficiency. Martin stated, "When little room is reserved for individuality in an educational scheme, it is far easier to treat differences as a problem to be overcome"

(p. 125). The third reason Martin gave for rejecting the one curriculum for all policy is that its implied support “of the goal of absolute self-sufficiency leads to the equation of dependence on other with personal inadequacy and failure” (p.125).

Noddings (1992) encouraged opening the dialogue so that we keep from burying our heads in the sand and denying that problems between people of different race, ethnicity, religion, and gender do exist. She noted that in schools the tendency is to preach more often than to teach about these areas. When we find ourselves struggling to understand problems in these areas, one solution suggested by Noddings is that, “When we are committed to connection but are unsure how to achieve it, we need genuine dialogue with concrete others. Then we may come to a satisfactory resolution governing this time, these people, this place” (p. 120). A member of the Harvard Medical School Faculty, Robert Brooks, Ph.D. (1991) wrote the book, *The Self-Esteem Teacher*, which presented a framework for strategies for nurturing self-esteem in students. His book is written in an anecdotal style wherein he described high-risk children who become successful adults as resilient. Brooks imparted that he is convinced that every educator is capable of becoming a charismatic adult who helps students discover the positive in themselves, as well as others, and instills in them a sense of enthusiasm and self-worth. He supported his ideas with the findings of a Massachusetts Department of Education report about at-risk students and the significant role an educator can play:

Possibly the most critical element to success within school is a student developing a close and nurturing relationship with at least one caring adult. Students need to feel that there is someone within school whom they know, to whom they can turn, and who will act as an advocate for them. (p. 12)

Teachers who work in multi-cultural classrooms may at times become discouraged and think there is no way to make a difference. Perhaps they get caught up in the bureaucracy of school, or become so exhausted by the daily stresses, they cannot realize the important role they play in the lives of their students. In his book, *Among Schoolchildren*, Tracy Kidder observed:

Teachers usually have no way of knowing that they have made a difference in a child's life, even when they have made a dramatic one. But for children who are used to thinking of themselves as stupid or not worth talking to or deserving rape and beatings, a good teacher can provide an astonishing revelation. A good teacher can give a child at least a chance to feel, "*She* thinks I'm worth something. Maybe I am." (pp. 312 - 313)

According to Karen Rogers (1999), author of a dissertation titled, *The Essence of Care in the Classroom*, teachers should carefully examine the character education programs in the market place today. She wrote that:

Many times intending to help, teachers become involved in programs that drill students in certain behaviors at the expense of engaging them in thought-filled discussion and reflection about ways of being. It is the easier course to view teaching as a matter of telling than to create the relationship that cultivates caring. (p. 48)

Children are sensitive to the atmosphere that abounds in their classroom and teachers who connect in a compassionate way with their students model one possible way of being. We, as educators, must carefully consider our educational principles and begin to ask, what is missing in the curriculum for all students, including those who are multi-culturally diverse? Rogers quoted herself, “My hunch is that if we allow ourselves to give who we really are to the children in our care, we will some way inspire cartwheels in their hearts. What great professions we are all in together” (Rogers, 1994, p. 33).

In 2002, Gretchen McAllister, wrote an article, “The Role of Empathy in Teaching Culturally Diverse Students: A Qualitative Study of Teachers’ Beliefs.” The article was drawn from her dissertation that was named the 2000 AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) Outstanding Dissertation Award Winner. The study included 34 practicing teachers’ beliefs regarding the role of empathy as an attribute in their effectiveness with culturally diverse students. The results of her study underscored the importance of creating contexts in teacher education and professional development programs in which teachers and interns use and nurture empathic behaviors and

dispositions. All of the teachers in McAllister's study were involved in a multicultural professional development seminar called CULTURES (Center for Urban Learning/Teaching and Urban Research in Education and Schools). The goal of this program was to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in urban schools and assist practicing teachers to work effectively with culturally diverse students. McAllister reported that all 34 teachers perceived empathy as an important factor in working effectively with diverse students. One participant said that empathy means to see someone else's point of view and through that understanding, create personal connections with people from various cultures (p. 437). Teachers in the study discussed empathic dispositions and behaviors to develop a variety of attributes such as sensitivity, patience, respect, tolerance, acceptance, understanding, flexibility, openness, and humility. In addition, they discussed how they invoked these personal qualities when working with culturally diverse students in their classrooms. McCallister indicated teachers' perception of empathy in educational practice could be designated in three categories: (a) positive interactions with students, (b) supportive classroom environments, and (c) student-centered classrooms (p. 440). McCallister concluded:

Such empathic behaviors, often associated as an attribute of caring, help promote a positive relationship with students and a positive classroom climate. Moreover, the research literature confirms that empathy and caring are linked with high academic achievement,

particularly for culturally diverse students (Foster, 1995; Irvine, 1990).  
(p. 440)

*The Sneetches* is a book written for children by Dr. Seuss. Peter Glassman (2004), founder of Books of Wonder, New York City's oldest independent bookstore, considered this book a commentary on the struggle for civil rights. He remembered reading this story as a small child, and that it made a strong impression on his young mind. "How silly that anyone could think they were better because they had a star on their belly!" (p. 264). However, as he reflected on it as an adult, he attributed it to the shaping of his views on intolerance and racism. Glassman wrote:

But the truth is that Dr. Seuss taught millions of children not only to read, but to think. And he taught us – not through fear and warnings, but through joy and laughter – that what makes us different on the outside is not important. It's what we share on the inside that makes us all special. For in one way or another, we're all Sneetches. And that old con artist Sylvester McMonkey McBean is still wrong – for Dr. Seuss proved that you can teach a Sneetch! (Glassman, 2004, Introductory Essay, p. 264)



## Conclusion

*Whether humanity will consciously follow the law of love, I do not know. But that need not disturb me. The law will work just as the law of gravitation works, whether we accept it or not. The person who discovered the law of love was a far greater scientist than any of our modern scientist. Only our explorations have not gone far enough and so it is not possible for everyone to see all its workings.*

Mahatma Gandhi

Quite often the stories I am told by my students and their parents shock my sensibilities. However, I have come to terms with these stories as their lived reality. I cannot make their reality my reality. In spite of that fact, I must find a way to be a compassionate connection in their lives. Hopefully, I can take the reality of my most carefree childhood and use the lessons learned there to impart that same feeling of security and joy to the children I teach.

Unfortunately, the research indicate that those of us in the educational field have not yet learned the lessons that will help us become not only good teachers, but exemplarily ones that others would wish to emulate. There still seems to be far too much emphasis placed on the way education has been enacted traditionally. For its content, traditional education relies upon subjects, often taught as isolated facts, or the cultural heritage, which tends to exclude a vast number of the children who inhabit our public schools. Dewey's theory of progressive education encouraged, among other concepts, experience, experiment, purposeful learning, and freedom. The societal changes discussed

in section two are undeniable. Noddings (1992) affirmed, “the traditional organization of schooling is intellectually and morally inadequate for contemporary society. We live in an age troubled by social problems that force us to reconsider what we do in schools” (p. 173). Just look in any classroom and you will clearly see children who are products of those changes. Too many educators think we can improve schooling by a better form of curriculum and instruction or classroom management. Noddings (1992) challenged that “we need to give up the notion of an ideal of the educated person and replace it with a multiplicity of models designed to accommodate the multiple capacities and interest of students” (p. 173). Analysis of the term care as it relates to the teacher’s role, and classrooms with diverse student populations has been revealed through many literary sources – yet, there still seems to be one essential element missing. That is where Compassionate Connectivity takes its rightful place in the discussion of quality education for all people regardless of economic status, race, culture, gender, or creed. The meaning of this construct will become apparent through the reiteration of lives lived and stories shared pertaining to its relevance.

## CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

### THE ROADMAP TO DISCOVERY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover if another group of teachers would have a meaningful experience by reading and discussing Jane Roland Martin's (1992) *The Schoolhome: Rethinking school for changing families*. As teacher how do they experience this set of readings? Through reading and discussion, what happens to them or what doesn't happen to them? To provide support for my conjecture that Compassionate Connectivity can exist in every classroom, I will test this construct in real-life situations. In order to answer these questions and determine the validity of the existence of Compassionate Connectivity, it was necessary to study the background and lived experiences of practicing early childhood educators. In addition to gathering biographical and historical information a book study of Martin's *The Schoolhome* was conducted. For the purpose of obtaining empirical data, a qualitative research design utilizing the phenomenological method and critical social science was employed. Through the course of this book study, I elicited the narratives of these teachers in an effort to help further clarify the possibility for the existence and meaning of my theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity. An examination and analysis of these teacher's stories about the lived experiences of their classrooms and the educational system within which they function will clarify how they experienced this set of readings and the discussion group meetings.

## Design of the Study

Gandhi's idea of Satyagraha is a plan of action which connects meaning, truth, and spirit for personal and social transformation. Fleener (2002) indicated the theory behind the title, *Curriculum Dynamics -- Recreating Heart*, is her vision of putting the heart back into schooling. As she described it, "Recreating heart is the *Satyagraha* [sic] of transforming schooling. It is the reasserting of meaning, purpose, value, and care as the driving forces of the curriculum" (p .3). Fleener also proposed that curriculum is self-organizing and emergent, much like Dewey's notion of experience made the teacher an integral part of the curriculum not just a maker of it. Curriculum dynamics is explained as a way of exploring the complexity of schooling as a social institution. "Curriculum will be seen to be the heart of schooling and curriculum dynamics the breath of life of the social and organizational matrix that includes schools" (p. 3).

Educators are interested in life. The life of the classroom or the students therein can become a laboratory school similar to the one Dewey created a century ago. Classrooms or schools are the most vital place to study learning and teaching and how they take place. In a classroom, observations can be made about the leading out of diverse lives, the social systems, attitudes, beliefs and values, and how they are all connected to the educational process. In his book, *The Enlightened Eye*, Elliot Eisner (1998) noted, "The most obvious and significant locales for qualitative research in education are schools and classrooms" (pp. 170 – 171). He listed the following three hallmarks of qualitative method: Flexibility, adjustment, and iterative ability. He proposed

the function of qualitative inquiry is to remain in touch with what's important by emphasizing the complex nature of such work and its reliance on the qualitative researcher's sensibilities and good judgment. Realizing there is no established body of procedures to follow when doing qualitative research in an educational setting, Eisner suggested treating his ideas as heuristic rather than a set of algorithms. The lack of methodological procedures can be attributed to the nature of qualitative inquiry itself. Eisner (1998) included four idiosyncrasies in qualitative inquiry which prevent the establishment of a set of rules or formula to follow. They are:

1. Qualitative inquiry places a high premium on the exploitation of the researcher's unique strengths, rather than on standardization and uniformity.
2. Qualitative works of all forms are influenced by style, and because style is personal, an inevitable personal dimension enters in – a dimension that is typically minimized in conventional research methodology.
3. Qualitative research often takes weeks, months, or even years to conduct. It is impossible to predict the unfolding of events; these unanticipated conditions require adjustments to the researcher's course of action.
4. Qualitative research proposals, by their very nature, do not lend themselves to the kind of finality and specificity often found in quantitative research methods. (pp. 169 – 170)

D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (2000) have co-authored the book, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, which explained how narrative inquiry can be used in educational and social science research. Contrary to more traditional research methods which rely on dry facts and numerical data to be quantified, narrative inquiry effectively encapsulates personal and human elements that defy quantification. Thus, narrative becomes a way to understand research and lived experiences. In the prologue, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reiterated this idea from a previous work (1994):

People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities. (Prologue, xxiv)

The nature of experience, as conceptualized by Dewey, is the foundation piece for the work of Clandinin and Connelly. “*Experience* is a key term in these diverse inquiries....Dewey transforms a commonplace term, experience, in our educators’ language into an inquiry term, and gives us a term that permits better understandings of educational life” (p. 2). Dewey recognized experience as both personal and social. People are always in relation in a social context; therefore they cannot be understood only as individuals. Another key to the educational thinking of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) is continuity, one of Dewey’s criterion of experience. Continuity is “the notion that experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences” (p. 2).

Clandinin and Connelly mentioned five features or areas of tension that must be considered in narrative thinking. The first feature is temporality, which has to do with an event or thing, having a past, present, and an implied future. The second feature is people and the importance of the ability to narrate the person in context with the process. A third feature is that of action which centered on how an event is understood as a narrative sign in narrative thinking. The fourth feature is certainty because in narrative thinking, interpretations of events can always be otherwise imparting a sense of tentativeness. Context is the fifth feature in narrative thinking. Context is always present and necessary for making sense of any person, event or thing. Context is inclusive of such ideas as temporal context, spatial context, and context of other people. As an element of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly considered these features to be interconnected instead of independent factors. (pp. 29 – 32)

In the article she wrote for the *Curriculum Inquiry* journal, “Thesis as Narrative or ‘What Is the Inquiry in Narrative Inquiry?’”, Carola Conle (2000) presented elements of inquiry in a dissertation composed through experiential narrative. In addition, she showed how aesthetic and reflective activities contributed to the inquiry. This dissertation topic lends itself beautifully to this type of visual and insightful analysis of the lived experiences in a classroom setting. Conle conceptualized her study as an “Attempt to highlight the intellectual as well as emotional qualities inherent in narrative inquiry” (p. 191). She relied on the idea Dewey held that both art and science have aesthetic

elements (1934, p. 120). She described her narrative inquiry as a quest – an artistic and an intellectual one. Conle also pointed out that the process is both practical and theoretical whereby a narrative account of the practice is offered and an attempt to conceptualize the practice is done simultaneously. She described that as a complicated undertaking, “Because I seem to speak in two voices simultaneously: the narrator’s voice that present the case, and the theoretical voice that conceptualized what is presented. Moreover, my narrator’s voice tells about something very abstract” (p. 193). Instead of the presentation of the stories that make her dissertation, the narrator’s voice submits a description of the way they evolved and the theorist’s voice the effects they produced. My research will be presented in the phenomenological sociology method. In Thomas Schwandt’s *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, he explained this methodology as social theory which aims to describe the structures of experience or the life-world. Schwandt (2001) stated: “Its principal architect was Alfred Schutz (1859 – 1956), who built on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) to develop a phenomenological foundation for Weber’s idea of meaningful social action” (p. 190). Schwandt continued:

Schutz aimed to explain how it is that the life-world is actually produced and experienced by individuals. He sought to explain the essence of what he called the ‘natural attitude’ --- the fact that we do not doubt the existence of the everyday world and its intersubjective, social character. Schultz argued that to effectively study the everyday work, the social



inquirer must bracket or suspend one's taken-for-granted attitude toward its existence; the inquirer must assume the attitude of a disinterested observer.

(pp. 190 – 191)

The goal of critical social science is to blend practical philosophy and explanatory social science to fundamentally transform the intentions of both. "Practical philosophy is concerned with the specifics of ethical and political life (*praxis*) and the actions that must be undertaken to achieve the good life; explanatory social science produced scientific knowledge of the general causes of social *action*" (Schwandt, p. 45). Several general themes characterize critical social science: First its intent is to facilitate the integration of theory and practice in a way for individuals and groups to become aware of the contradictions and distortions in their belief systems and social practices thereby inspired to change those beliefs and practices.

Its method here is immanent critique, which challenges belief systems and social relations not by comparing them to some set of external standards but by showing that these practices do not measure up to their own standards and are internally inconsistent, hypocritical, incoherent, and hence comprise a false consciousness. (p. 45)

Second, critical social science is descriptive and explanatory thus not merely practical and normative. Third, it is grounded in an analysis of instrumental, technical reason.

Critical theorists (among other social theorists) argue that this kind of means-end reasoning is pervasive; it informs the traditional empirical-analytic sciences and dominates not only societal processes and cultural meaning but also the dynamics of personality formation. Critical social scientists argue that instrumental reason aims to eliminate crisis, conflict, and critique. Although founded in the Enlightenment bid to liberate people from myth, ignorance, and oppression, the rationalization of social and individual life by means of instrumental reason actually works to suppress the very self-transformative, self-reflexive, critical, liberating impulses on which it was founded. Critical inquiry supports a kind of reasoning that is practical, moral, and ethically and politically informed.

(pp. 45-46)

Fourth, critical social science posits that a form of investigation is needed that promotes enlightened self-knowledge and effective social-political action. “The logic of critical social inquiry requires linking hermeneutic and explanatory social scientific interests to normative concerns” (p. 46). The final theme is the self-reflexive nature of critical social science. The theory must provide explanation for its own conditions of possibility and its transformative effects in order to prevent a critical theory of society from becoming another self-serving philosophy. “It rejects the idea of *disinterested social science* and emphasizes attending to the culture and historical condition on which the theorist’s own intellectual activity depends” (p. 46).

In her book, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/In the Postmodern*, Patti Lather (1991) explored “what it means to do empirical research in a post positivist/postmodern era, an era premised on the essential indeterminacy of human experiencing” (p. 1). She viewed postmodern writing as an effort to use and call into question a discourse, all at the same time, in an effort to challenge and inscribe dominate meaning systems thereby allowing the construction of categories and frameworks as contingent, positioned, partial. Lather, included five fundamental assumptions which guide her work. The first is the definitive critique of positivism or the idea that everything knowable comes from the supposed impersonal norms and procedures of science. Positivist assumptions have been challenged in view of human complexity and new possibilities are relevant in the human sciences. Secondly, Lather acknowledged that inquiry is value-laden in that ways of knowing are based on perspective and bound by culture. She stated, “I conceptualize ideology as the stories a culture tells itself about itself” (p. 2). Consequently, she presented the stance that an approach to critical inquiry should be both openly ideological and self- reflexivity, of increasing awareness of how researcher values pervade inquiry. The possibilities for a critical social science make up the third assumption that guides Lather’s work. She explained that within the perspective of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, critical reason was used as the interpretive framework of instrumental reason. Lather indicated this is what Van Maanen (1988) called critical tales which ask questions of history, economy, power and exploitation. She quoted Poster (1989): “Critical theory

springs from an assumption that we live amid a world of pain, that much can be done to alleviate that pain, and that theory has a crucial role to play in that process” (p. 3). The politics of empowerment, she explained, is that research approaches must be developed which will empower those researchers who are inclined to understand the world and change it. The challenges inherent in postmodernism are that it questions the politics of emancipation. Lather defined critical inquiry as the development of understanding research participants’ world view. A dialogic research design, which encourages participants to be actively involved in the construction and validation of meaning, is vital to the establishment of such understanding. Additionally, for the dispossessed, critical inquiry serves as inspiration and guidance in the cultural transformation process. Critical inquiry helps dispossessed people realize how to free up rigid ideological understandings by focusing on fundamental contradictions. The researcher joins the participants in a theoretically guided program of action over an extended period of time which encourages a cyclic process of critical analysis and enlightened action. Lather summed up critical inquiry with these words:

The development of emancipatory social theory requires an empirical stance which is open-ended, dialogically reciprocal, grounded in respect to human capacity and, yet, profoundly skeptical of appearances and “common sense.” Such an empirical stance is, furthermore, rooted in a commitment to the long-term, broad-based ideological struggle necessary to transform structural inequalities. (p. 65)

A critical element to any research design is the criteria used for the establishment of validity. Lather addresses this issue of validity with a three pronged approach. She named triangulation as a critical means for establishing data trustworthiness by the inclusion of “multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes” (pp. 66 – 67). She encouraged researchers to use designs which search out counter patterns in addition to convergence for credible data. Construct validity must be addressed “within a conscious context of theory-building” (p. 67) A self-critical attitude that addresses how a researcher’s own presumptions affect the research is critical to determining that theoretical constructs are in fact occurring. Face validity, a relatively complex idea, can be associated with those a-ha moments where the light bulb in your brain suddenly seems to illuminate. As a context for understanding, Lather used this description: “Face validity is operationalized by recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a subsample of respondents” (p. 67). The last and the least well-known is the notion of catalytic validity. From Lather’s description this one will serve a very important role in validating my research. In her words, “Catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it” (p. 68). In response to the positivist demand for researcher neutrality she offered this idea:

The argument for catalytic validity lies not only within recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process, but also in the desire to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-

understanding and ultimately, self-determination through research participation. (p. 68)

In the pursuit of rigor for my research design, I intend to make the most of these four essentials of establishing validity so that relevant issues related to my research can aid in transforming our society and creating a just and compassionate world.

Eisner (1998) perceived the development of perceptivity or connoisseurship to be at the heart of any form of qualitative inquiry. Perceptivity is the achievement of experience of a classroom, school, community, textbook, set of instructional materials, or student work that provides the material from which patterns are perceived and interpretations are made. He proposed, that “The teacher needs to experience the qualities of a class to have a basis for action. The qualitative researcher must experience the qualities that pervade a classroom to have a basis for any kind of theoretical interpretation” (p. 230).

Because I am a practicing educator in an early childhood classroom, I will be able to utilize this concept of perceptivity on a first-hand basis. My research design, however, will include other practicing educators which will mean that information garnered from them will be of a secondhand nature. This fact will make it that much more important that I record their thoughts and ideas in a very objective fashion. I will look for the patterns and make interpretations through the recording of their oral historical accounts of life in their classrooms

and any transformative process that may evolve while participating in the book study.

## **Participants**

The participants for this research were solicited from a large urban school district with fifty-six elementary schools. Contact was made to the office of the Director of Early Childhood to request a list of teachers who may have expressed an interest in conceptualizing their practice in innovative ways, which may offer insight into constructs for amelioration. Many teachers consider themselves to be life-long learners and are eager to become involved in educative activities that will provide growth and inform their credo. For the purpose of this research, six practicing early childhood educators were selected to participate in a book study of Martin's *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. The teachers were identified using a sample of convenience consisting of colleagues and referrals from the district contact. The participants in this study are Caucasian women, ages 28 to 67. Two teach pre-k, one teaches kindergarten, and three teach first grade. These teachers are from a number of different schools representing all areas of the city with the exception of one area which mainly caters to students from middle and high income families. Although the demographics of each school's population varied widely, all participants teach at a Title I school which is represented by lower socio-economic student populations.

## **Purposive Sampling**

While, the teacher participant selection was limited to those in early childhood education, the sampling maintained a representative quality by the selection of teachers from diverse cultures and diverse school settings. Biographical information was obtained on each participant so that the characteristics of the sample could be explained in detail upon completion. At this point in the research design it seems appropriate to address the issue of ethics in qualitative inquiry. Schwandt (2001) described ethics as “the justification of human actions, especially as those actions affect others” (p. 73). In social research, addressing ethical issues goes beyond consideration of models of ethical reasoning and ethical theories. Schwandt described the intertwining of ethics, epistemology and politics for researchers like this:

Inquirers cannot rightly understand their ethics – habits, obligations, and modes of thought that shape and define their interactions as social scientists with others – without simultaneously thinking through what constitutes legitimate, warranted knowledge of social life as well as what comprises their political commitments and responsibilities as inquirers into the nature and meaning of human affairs. (p. 73)

Ethical reasoning incorporates a deductive model of practical reasoning or applied ethics and narrative ethics which deals with the importance of personal identity and the virtues of character. Due to the nature of this research, which required extended personal exchanges and substantial dealings between me, the researcher, and those whom I studied, a heightened awareness in order to



foresee possible ethical dilemmas was maintained. To fulfill the contractual ethical obligations, I sent each participant a preliminary letter explaining the research process in which they were being asked to participate. The letter included details about the purpose of the research, the procedures that will be employed, the amount of time entailed, information about informed consent, how anonymity and/or confidentiality will be handled, the potential risks and benefits, and how to obtain further information from me. Additionally, an informed consent document was signed by each participant and a copy given to them.

### **Data Sources**

Personal History Interviews –In *Recording Oral History*, the author, Valerie Raleigh Yow, wrote, “The qualitative researcher learns about a way of life by studying the people who live it and asking them how they think about their experiences. The many examples they offer in their testimony are carefully studied” (p. 7). This type of interview offers the advantage of discovering something not even thought of previously. Probing questions that will reveal underlying reasons for a decision or idea will be utilized throughout this research study. In this way, the dialogue can be opened and expanded to explore completely new ideas that may arise as a result of the shared life stories. By utilizing this research method, collaboration with my participants will be established in an interactive manner. Yow (1994) stated:

In the recounting of events, the deeper layers of our thinking may be revealed, indicating the centuries' long development of the culture in which we have our being. For this, oral history testimony is a research method par excellence because the researcher can question the narrator. (p. 24)

Personal Journals -- Participants were asked to keep a journal to jot down questions, thoughts, or relevant information that may occur while reading for the book study and subsequently working with children in their classrooms. Questions and quotations were provided for the participants to respond to in the journals and these became a jumping off point for the group discussions during the bi-weekly meetings. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described autobiographical writing as useful to researchers in many ways because it is a way to write about the whole context of a life (p.101). Journals are a powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience.

Oral life history – information will be gleaned through the discussion of our lived experiences as educators. Yow (1994) explained, “The understanding of the multiplicity of experiences in a total life context is the objective” (p. 24). Oral history is subjective because individual’s interpretation of an event may change due to subsequent events infusing new ideas for elucidation. However, valuable insight into the world of another to reveal the meanings of lived experiences can be afforded by in-depth interviews. Clandinin and Connelly referred to these three data sources as field texts.

## **Data Analysis**

In order to analyze the data effectively (make sense of, interpret, and theorize), a variety of procedures that facilitate working back and forth between data and ideas was used. "Analysis begins with the processes of organizing, reducing, and describing the data and continues through the activity of drawing conclusions or interpretations from the data and warranting those interpretations. If data could speak for themselves, analysis would not be necessary" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 6). Because a large amount of data was gathered from many different sources, personal history interviews, personal journals, oral life histories, and observations, I developed a method for sorting and organizing the data. I have included a description of four strategies for organizing and developing typologies for formulating working hypotheses.

Data Log – A data logging system in order to manage the storage and retrieval of the data sources was employed. A notebook with dividers served well as a method for organizing, cataloging, and indexing my data materials. The actual journals and transcriptions of oral history, group discussions, and observations will be kept in a locked file cabinet with divider tab labels for ease of access.

Coding of the data was conducted for the purpose of generating theories and concepts as well as testing hypotheses. Schwandt (2001) used this description, "Coding is a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments" (p. 26). Coding was an on-going part of the research. New data was constantly being

compared and contrasted and subsequently categorized. For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, a hermeneutic method was utilized.

Hermeneutic Method Because the research was in the realm of human sciences, and human action is intentional, it required a different method of explanation than that used for the natural sciences. Hermeneutics refers to the art, theory, and philosophy of interpreting the meaning of an object which can be text, social action, and the words of the participants in my research project. This act of interpreting is a process for clarification and subsequent illumination of meaning that at first may seem elusive. Schwandt described it as, a kind of critical analysis or explanation using the method of the *hermeneutic circle*.

The method involves playing the strange and unfamiliar parts of action, text, or utterance off against the integrity of the action, narrative, or utterance as a whole until the meaning of the strange passages and the meaning of the whole are worked out or accounted for. (p. 114)

To ensure the objectivity of the interpretations, particular caution that my self understanding and historical situation do not interfere with uncovering the actual meaning embedded in the text, act, or utterance must be maintained.

Moustakas (1994), quoting Giorgi, summarized a step-by-step procedural method for analysis:

1. The researcher reads the entire description of the learning situation straight through to get a sense of the whole.
2. Next, the researcher reads the same description more slowly and delineates each time that a transition in meaning is perceived with

respect to the intention of discovering the meaning, a series of meaning units or constituents.

3. The researcher then eliminates redundancies and clarifies or elaborates to himself the meaning of the units he just constituted by relating them to each other and to the sense of the whole.
4. The researcher reflects on the given units, still expressed essentially in the concrete language of the subject, and comes up with the essence of that situation for the subject. Each unit is systematically interrogated for what it reveals. The researcher transforms each unit, when relevant, into the language of psychological science.
5. The researcher synthesizes and integrates the insights achieved into a consistent description of the structure of learning. (pp. 13 – 14)

In Moustakis' terms:

The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived, in other words the essences or structures of the experience. (p. 13)

### **Study Methodology**

The book study group consisted of six two hour sessions which were audio taped for later transcription. In addition, there was a preliminary meeting which served many purposes:

- To introduce the participants one to another
- To explain the whole process and commitment involved
- To gather signatures for informed consent
- To pass out the books, *The Schoolhome* and folders for journaling
- To establish a calendar of convenient dates for future meetings
- To read and discuss the Epilogue together

At the conclusion of this first meeting, I handed the participant's a paper with a few questions and quotes pertinent to the reading of Chapter One. The questions and quotes were meant to serve as a preliminary point for our discussions of each chapter

The six subsequent discussion meetings lasted about two hours. Each was planned for discussing one chapter every two weeks over a four month time period. One additional meeting was convened to discuss the impact, if any this study has had on lived experiences in their classrooms.

Additionally, oral history interviews were scheduled individually and lasted about an hour. These interviews were also audio-taped for later transcription. The anonymity of the participants was maintained by using a pseudonym for each participant while transcribing the tapes. Access to the audiotapes was limited to the principal researcher. All tapes will be erased after the research study has been completed and time restrictions satisfied. The personal history interview tapes and oral life history tapes, garnered from the book study and follow-up meeting were transcribed. Transcriptions were verified for accuracy by listening to each tape while reading the transcript. This

process allowed for the complete immersion in the data. While reading and re-reading the transcriptions of the interviews several times an analysis to discover, themes, patterns, and categories was performed. The transcripts were color coded by themes. Selections that embodied the data findings were identified. These findings were used to formulate conclusions, questions, and implications for further research.

## CHAPTER FOUR – OPENING DOORS

*The doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live.*

Flora Whittlemore

### Getting to Know You – The Teacher Participants

Stephanie

*That bright September morning in 1957, I remember getting up a little earlier than usual. I wanted to look my best for my first day of school. Breakfast consisted of a bowl of hot steamy Cream of Wheat with a pat of melted butter and a spoonful of brown sugar on top. That combination of buttery, sweet, creamy wheat was comforting as it melted in my mouth and slid down my throat. I was in such a state of nervous anticipation that I could hardly quit squirming in my chair, which was directly across from my brother and closest to daddy's end of the dining room table. Mommy told me to quit chattering so that I could finish eating. Finally, I asked my mom, "May I be dismissed?" She nodded her head and said, "Yes, you may." I flew to my room to begin getting dressed. Only the fanciest dress would do on a day like today. I was going to begin first grade! First I must put on my fullest petticoat nothing else would do it justice. Mommy had carefully pressed every last ruffle on that beautiful dress with row upon row of ruffles. The dress, a cornflower blue, went on over my head. A whiff of fresh air and sunshine filled my nose as it fell down upon my shoulders and settled around my waist like an inverted blue flower. I turned for my mother to fasten up the buttons and she carefully smoothed the*



*little white collar. She smiled at me as if to say everything will be fine. My kindergarten year hadn't been a stellar success. I felt like such a small insignificant duck in a huge pond that I couldn't find a place of comfort.*

*In first grade you got to read! I knew how to read. That is something to get comfortable with. All of these thoughts were running through my mind as I carefully folded down the tops of my white cotton anklets. The shiny black patent Mary Jane's with the T-strap slipped easily on each foot. Carefully I began to buckle them. Though, my fingers wouldn't cooperate so daddy helped me secure the last one. Mommy ran a comb through my long brown hair and finally I was ready for this momentous day. This felt like a day for new beginnings which had been nervously anticipated for several weeks. My brother and I stepped out of our front door onto the porch of our small wood-framed home. My daddy had prepared a chalkboard sign which read – Freddy and Stephi first day of school – September 6, 1957. Daddy was recording this day in history on an 8mm camera. Freddy and I stepped down the three steps leading to our sidewalk. We walked down the driveway hand in hand waved goodbye to our parents and meandered down the street. My shoes made a clickity- clack sound on the pavement as Freddy and I, joined by other children along the way, walked the four blocks to our elementary school. All the while, these questions were floating around in my mind: "Would my teacher like me? Would I have any friends? Would anyone notice my cornflower blue dress? Would anyone notice me the insignificant duckling with row upon row of ruffled*

*feathers?” Just what was in store wasn’t clear but I felt confidence along with trepidation for whatever this year had to offer.*

*At last we had arrived, the first pre-fab in a row of many all painted white. Slowly I turned and gave Freddy a kiss on the cheek. Freddy let go of my hand then I bravely walked in the front door of my first grade classroom. My teacher, Miss Way, was standing by her desk. She was a small almost frail looking woman with short curly brown hair and sparkly eyes. She said, “Hello,” and smiled at me. At that moment, I knew that here was a pond that felt safe and secure similar to home.*

#### Personal Her-story Interviews

*There are people whom one loves immediately and forever. Even to know they are alive in the world with one is quite enough.*

Nancy Spain

The teacher participant’s voice – stories of the past

Studying and reading to complete the coursework for a PhD in Educational Studies did not necessarily change the way I approached teaching either from a scientific or artistic standpoint. What happened to me was more a change in the way I viewed aspects of my teaching day. What seemed on the surface to be not important or rather mundane activities that occurred throughout the day in my classroom began to take on new meaning. These seemingly insignificant events began to take on new relevance as an explanation for a transformation in our classroom environment. My research

led me to work with a small group of early childhood educators to explore this phenomenon further. I wondered if another group of teachers would have a meaningful experience by reading and discussing Martin's *The Schoolhome: Rethinking schools for changing families?* As teachers how do they experience this set of readings? Through reading and discussion what happens to them or what doesn't happen to them?

Humans tell stories each and every day. We share the events of our day with family, friends, and colleagues. The minute details of our experiences are shared with others and through the social process of comparing and contrasting we are able to construct reality. Meaning is derived from our personal narratives. It is through the interactive process of telling a story that meaning-making occurs. The story and the language used to convey its details illuminate and reveal our understanding of reality. Narrative is a way of knowing for the storyteller and the listener, or in the case of narrative research, the participant and the researcher. Our personal narratives are proactive rather than passive, and it serves a purpose. They are the means or process whereby we construct meaning (Matthews, 2001).

According to Eisner (1998):

...whatever we come to know about the world will be known through our experience. Our experience, in turn, is mediated by prior experience. Our prior experience is shaped by culture, by language, by our needs, and by all of our ideas, practices, and events that make us human.

(p. 47)

I intended to let each participant's voice tell their story. The narratives of the teacher participant's as they share their personal histories will serve as a way of understanding their experiences and background. Through this process of communication I will open a window into the meaning of their lives. The teachers have revealed intimate details of their lives and experiences which have shaped their ideas of education and teaching. I have kept their narratives true and intact. Only the names and identities of people and places have been changed. These alterations will be placed in parenthesis.

### **Ann**

Ann is Caucasian and she is 67 years old. Ann lives in an area of a large urban community known as mid-town. She described the neighborhood where she lives in these words, "It was kind of aging and they are starting to move out and new little families are moving in with children. It is a really nice little neighborhood it has big shady trees." Her household consists of a husband who is retired and their show dogs. They have two grown children, a daughter and a son. Ann enjoys working with her show dogs and singing in her church choir. "My dad was a minister; he had a lot of little churches, so I guess I like the small church. We have a very active UMW [United Methodist Women]." I have been a Kappa [teacher sorority] member from about 1966. This is her thirty-eighth year teaching. She taught for seven years before she had children. After taking seven years off and getting her children in school, she went back and has been teacher for the last 30 years. Most of her career

has been spent at the same school in an area that has suffered from White flight and some would now consider the area a ghetto. "I enjoy it [teaching at my school], I have never been sorry that I did it." She took her children to school with her. She is not sure she would do that again. Ann continued, "(My daughter) was such a perceptive little person; she thanked me for taking her to a school where there were all kinds of people." Ann taught at (her present school) for 33 years. She was a substitute during the seven years she took off to keep her foot in the door. "I had a chance to go to (her present school) to do this new Century Reading Program. It was really good. I don't know why they stopped doing that." She described her school with these words:

From 1966 – 69, I taught at (her present school). The population was all White at that time and there were some Native Americans. A real nice little blue collar neighborhood, it is still a nice little neighborhood. Apache Manor feeds into us, they have really cleaned that up. They have real strict rules and if they don't adhere to them they kick them out. The neighborhood still consists of real cute little white frame houses. Apache Manor was not built until 1969. I taught in the pre-fabs, nice little wooden buildings. (A previous school) was an upper middle class population; all my gifts were from (an upper-end store) that year. The kids now, we have some who are really poor, but they all dress really nice. They get cute little clothes from Wal-mart. It is a very low income working class population. They [the parents] work at Braum's and a lot of them work at Wal-mart. We have some parents we know that don't

work. You talk to the kids and they don't have a father or he is in jail.

Mostly it is single parent families. I have one student who is being raised by a great aunt. We have a few White students, and Hispanic students.

We have a large bi-racial population. They are very color conscious.

We were talking about it the other day and I said no one is really black, they may be dark brown, and no one is really white, we all have color.

To gain a greater understanding of my research participants, I asked them what motivated them to become a teacher. Only two research participants knew from an early age that they were destined to become teachers. The other four had another course of college study which was leading them to other career choices. Each changed their career path to teaching for a number of different reasons. Ann revealed that she did not start off to college with the intention of becoming a teacher.

I went to Phillips University a small college in Enid. I went to school to become a physical therapist. After one year of pre-med, I decided I was going to have to work too hard. I always knew that I was going to college. My dad went to Phillips. My grandmother told me one time that she went to school through eighth grade and then went to work for someone. She always said go to school as much as you can. She always had teachers living in her house in the summer, when she lived in Emporia, Kansas. She surrounded herself with people who were educated. My sophomore year I changed over. I really think there was a higher plan because I don't think I was smart enough to pick that out for

myself. There must have been divine intervention or something. I have never been sorry. I love it. I have always loved it and first grade especially. Except that New Century Reading when I did second through sixth and I did that for five years, I have always taught first grade.

I also asked my participants to share their own school experiences while growing up. I asked the research participants to describe a teacher that had an impact on their lives and to describe the impact. Most of the participants told specific ways that their teachers looked, dressed, or interacted with them. Their descriptions were based on feelings more than actual educative experiences. Ann was no exception.

[The teacher that had the greatest impact on me] I think one of my junior high English teachers really made an impact on me. I just loved to look at her and listen to her. I think she must have really involved you in the learning. She had silver hair in a Buster Brown type haircut and she wore the most beautiful red lipstick and she just really fascinated me. She was one of those teachers that you just loved to listen to. I loved English anyway. It was just easy for me, I always loved reading and writing. I'm not a very good writer but I like to do it. There was a home economics teacher too. I had a minor in home economics in high school. I just liked to do that kind of stuff. She was a real dynamic young person. She really had a big effect on me too because she was so excited and she made everything so interesting, the way she presented everything. She was real cute and she dressed real cute.

Their narrative while describing the best and worst teacher they ever had also focused on feelings more than anything that may have been taught.

[My best teacher] I told my mother that none of my first graders would remember me because I didn't remember mine. She said that is because you had three of them. Dad was a chaplain in the war. When the war was over we moved to California. I had a fourth grade teacher in Watonga. She was the most beautiful person I have ever seen. I just remember her as being warm and nurturing. I know I learned a lot.

[My worst teacher was] my English Literature professor in college, she was a demeaning person and I hated that always. She was someone who made you feel little and small or unintelligent. She did that to everybody. She totally ruined that class for me and I loved words. She was a very unpleasant person. We have to remember [those are] the ways we make our kids feel if we are not careful.

For the most part Ann enjoyed her school experiences but she was equally as candid when she told about her negative school experiences, as well as her experiences with classmates.

[My best school experience was] probably pledging when I was in college, we were actually just a social service club. Phillips didn't have sororities. That was just fun, maybe it was the closeness of the group. I didn't totally like it all because I couldn't be mean to the pledges and they really got mad at me for that. But, I just could not and it wasn't just the ornery things like cutting off their fingernails. They got to the point where



they started asking them – why do you think you are worthy enough to be in this club? I didn't like that. There was a family type feeling that was special, except when they were being mean to the pledges. I am a very soft hearted person I don't like that kind of stuff. Some of those people are friends forever.

[My worst school experience was] One of the worst things that happened was in junior high, we were passing notes about this girl and I think she was poor or something. This was a really good lesson for me. I think we said she needed to use Dial soap or something. Well the teacher got the note and he didn't do anything to us but just talk to us. I am telling you I was just crushed. That is probably one of the worst things that ever happened to me in my entire life. The girl may have sensed it because people were sneaking around. I don't remember if I actually wrote any part of it or whether I was just going to read and pass it on. But I was involved in it because I was allowing it to happen. I remember him bringing us up after class. He really handled that well. I guess the people who were involved weren't really that bad because we all ended up in tears. Geometry was a horrible experience because I never did get it. We had a football coach who was our teacher. As far as being ridiculed, nothing really bad stands out.

[My experiences with classmates] I went to high school in Denver and we are having a fiftieth reunion in September. I think I'll go. I haven't been back to any of them. The kids that I was closest to were all

a year older so I have kept in touch with a lot of them. The ones that were my immediate best friends I have totally lost track of them. I would like to go to see if they come because we were really good friends and it would be fun. Through our college years, they stayed in Colorado to go to school and I came back to Oklahoma to go to Phillips and so I just totally lost track of them. My college roommate and I are still close. We were roommates all through College. She was from Denver too. Mother and Daddy took us to Enid from Denver we drove straight through. They dumped us out on the street; we didn't bring very much stuff. They left us at Sears to get new bedspreads and stuff and they drove straight back to Denver. That was a journey she and I made together and we have been friends ever since.

[My experiences with care, concern, and connection] I really think we try a lot harder now. You were expected to come to school and to learn. My family prepared me very well in the fact they were very nurturing and there for us. We always had books. We had close extended family, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, a big family. So we went to school and you knew you were there to learn and no funny business. We would always get in trouble at home if we got in trouble at school. That one fourth grade teacher that I had that I loved so much, I went to her house all the time. Some of our teachers do more of that with our kids at school. Do you remember those two little girls who drowned in the strip pit behind our school? One of the teachers had just

taken one of the little girls out to dinner and a movie and she was so glad she did that. I think she did that because she knew that she was one that needed extra nurturing.

[My ideas of my educative worthiness] Math would probably be in there. I didn't have a bad experience with it. I just wasn't that interested in it. Now, Algebra in high school was taught by this little old lady. She just looked like a little old maid school teacher. But, oh, she could teach Algebra so I had no trouble. It was Geometry that really killed me. That is just not where my interest lay. I loved reading. By second grade, I was an unbelievable reader and I always felt good about that. I was phonetic automatically by nature. I can remember being embarrassed one time when we were sitting in the reading group – and I can remember it to this day, I called island – i/s/land. The teacher corrected me and that just about broke my heart. I guess, pretty much most of the time I felt my worth. There were times we were really poor. My dad got sick. He had a stroke at 39. He had just finished school. He just finished his bachelor in Divinity. So we ended up, that is when we lived in Emporia, Kansas so we could be close to my grandparents and they helped us or we would have been on the street I think. We always had good food and a warm place to live. My mother and aunts could do things with an old suit. They could completely take them apart and make them totally over and make the cutest stuff you have ever seen. So I knew we didn't have, there was never very much money to spend. But

there were times that I didn't get to do things at school because we didn't have money, like a concert or something. Those are kind of poignant times but not a lasting thing. I guess it's just because I knew what I had in the family way. Most of the people I knew – my mother's family were all farmers. I felt comfortable. I was a good student. I wasn't brilliant. I felt pretty good until I got to college – pre-med, you know.

### **Isabella**

Isabella is 50 years old and Caucasian. She lives in the same large urban community as Ann but south of mid-town. She described the area where she lives in these words: "In my neighborhood there are very few children. All the children are adults and are in college, have jobs, or married and moved away. It is mostly older people that are half of a hundred or more."

Isabella lives with her husband and a beagle. This year, she has a foreign exchange teacher from China, Ms Chie. Isabella has two children: "My daughter is in college she will graduate in May with a degree in Broadcasting. My son is an engineer with ChemTech." Besides teaching, Isabella enjoys her professional organizations like Kappa and (local and state teaching union). "This summer, I am going to China for a month. We are supposed to spread the excitement about what we learned, so that more people will take the East Asian class, and more schools will want the Chinese exchange teachers."

Isabella has taught for 28 years. "I started in 1979. I taught three years and then I quit and moved to Corpus Christi, Texas. Then I came back and got

rehired.” In 1979 she taught at an all African American school and most of the teachers were African American, very few Caucasian teachers, maybe four. “We had the first black principal. She was also the first black City Council Woman. She was the first in a lot of things.” Isabella taught first grade and second grade math.

I had 97 children and it was just too over-whelming, not one math manipulative. When I went into the classroom, I had two or three shoeboxes with Coca-Cola bottle caps with the corks. I thought that was disgusting so I threw them all away. No manipulative(s), nothing, I had the little workbooks and that was it. They went to Math and Reading, and they went to quote, centers, but it wasn't centers. Everything was paper pencil, paper pencil, it was awful. I was going to quit right before Thanksgiving but I kept thinking I can finish this year and then I will quit because I couldn't stand it. At the end of that year, I was able to make a change because they changed the status of that school. I think the kids at (that school) were pretty well to do. They were always dressed nice and I didn't have any hungry kids or if I did I didn't recognize it then. No, it was a pretty affluent area then. I left and went to (another close by school), it was an all white school, poor white. Only like 200 and something, I felt like Little House on the Prairie. I was (there) for two years then I moved to Texas. When I came back I got on at (an inner-city school), it was all black except for the four year olds and kindergarten because they are the only ones who had all day

kindergarten way back in the 80s. (The inner-city school) had all day kindergarten and (a suburban school) did too. (The inner-city school) got the white kids and (the suburban school) got the black kids. The all day four year olds, you had to pay for that, my son went to that. Then we had developmental first grade and a lot of people would bring their kids, white kids too, to the developmental first grade. Then they would put them back into their regular school. It was really kind of funny because you had white kids in pre-k, kindergarten and d-1 and all those classes were in pre-fabs. Then you went into the big building and the rest of the school was black. We were sort of segregated that way. I was there until my daughter turned five. Then I went to a magnet school, and it was 50/50. Really it was 5% Asian, 5% Native American, 40% Black, and 50% white. It was really a nice mix of everybody. I had done my student teaching there so I knew what it was all about and I loved it. I loved the diversity of everybody. I didn't realize it then but I like being around all the different languages and all the different people. Over the last several years, the population has changed.

[The teacher that had the greatest impact on my life was] my first grade teacher, Mrs. Brown, looked just like a grandma. My grandma was in Arkansas and I only saw her on Thanksgiving. I just fell in love with Mrs. Brown and I just thought she was it! I liked everything she did. I liked how she smelled. I liked her black high heels; now I think back they were those clunky with shoe lace strings, very old fashioned.

Everything I did she loved. The only thing I remember doing was writing 'I Love You' on those three folded paper towels. At the end of the day, she would have a stack 10 inches high of 'I Love You' 'I Love You' 'I Love You' because I could spell those words. I don't remember reading. I don't remember her reading to us. I don't remember the reading circle. I remember writing on those paper towels. I don't know if it was on inside days or maybe when we finished our work we got to do that or maybe that is what we did all day long. I just loved her and that is when I decided [to become a teacher]. That was probably her last year to teach. She inspired me to want to be a teacher and I never changed. I knew from that moment on. I suppose it was because she was just nice. Not that I hadn't been around nice people. She just had that love and you just loved her and you just wanted to be like her!

[My best teacher] Probably, the best when I look back, that really knew what she was doing would have been a fifth grade and sixth grade. I had her for two years, Ms. (teacher's name). It is kind of funny, because when I went to teach at (the small suburban school) she just left being the principal. She was my math teacher for those two years I had her at (elementary school). She really, she was ahead of her time. Each child had their own prescribed plan, like an IEP [Individualized Education Plan], all thirty of us. I don't how she did it. We were all working independently. She would pull small groups. Now when I look back, I think she probably favored the ones who could do it. I sure couldn't do it.

When I was in sixth grade, I always thought why can't I go over and learn about the, it was Geometry? She pulled about six or eight and you knew who they were, they were the super smart math kids. She was going to get them ready for seventh grade. But, she probably knew what she was doing. I wasn't ready for it. She had all these different math books. Maybe she gave us a pretest and I don't remember it. She would pull you one at a time to the back of the room. Of course, the room was dead quiet. She had a little steno pad and she would write your name and you need to do chapter two and four in the orange book, you need to do an SRA blue card five, six, and two. She would give you your sheet and you did not lose that sheet. You worked your prescribe thing. I got my first D from her. It just killed me. So my mother said, "You go and ask her what you need to do to bring this D up." So for every recess in fifth grade and probably sixth grade too, I would eat my lunch and go to her classroom. She had a class then, but I would go to the back and work on whatever she had prescribed for me. I just looked at my report card and I brought that D up to a B. Everybody hated her. She wore the little granny glasses down on her nose and she was all business. If you had her for last hour and the bell rang, you did not go. She purposefully waited two minutes or four minutes until she said, "Dismissed." Then you could get up and go out the door. When that bell rang you knew it wasn't over. She knew her stuff. Now they wouldn't be still, they wouldn't be quiet.



[My worst teacher] that would be in High School. I took him twice because he was an easy A. I had him for Biology first and then I took him for Earth Science. You could just get him talking on any subject. I really didn't learn anything about Earth Science and that was really sad because when I went to (the university) they were trying to find my strengths, should I start (the university) or should I go to (a junior college) first. She [the advisor] said, "But look here you are very strong in Earth Science." I thought, Oh Golly, no I'm not! He just liked me. If he liked you, you got an A. He was always late coming to school everybody [other teachers] would go in and lock their doors. Always when I would get there, there would be like 10 or 15 kids and we couldn't get in our classroom until he unlocked his door. Then we would go in so 15 or 20 minutes of the morning [was gone]. He used to tell us stories about how he was a real poor kid in college and he had to pay his way himself. He said, "All you have to do is" – this is the chemistry part I got from him – "you don't have to buy Windex, you just put a little ammonia and a little water and you go from house to house selling this ammonia and water made for ten cents. You can sell it for three or four dollars a bottle." That is how he put himself through college because he would say, "Let me show you how I can clean your window." I must have heard that story a thousand times.

[My best school experience] I liked the Science Fair because it was back when seashells were all over. You know, my mom had gotten

a collection. A lady at church had been to Guam and she gave me her box. I did get a sea shell book and I categorized them all and figured out what their names were and glued them all on a paper. I think I got first prize on that, I got a ribbon. I liked that science fair when I was in fourth or fifth grade. Then in sixth grade, you had to wait until sixth grade to work with clay that could be fired. I made the most beautiful swan. My mom collected swans at that time so I was going to make her this swan. It did just turn out beautiful. My dad still has that swan. When we moved I saw it and I thought, oh they still have it! The other, was I loved taking shorthand. I had a lot of business courses my junior year. I just loved my shorthand classes. I was fast and it was a competition thing. I never could beat one of these twins, the Day twins, but I was close. Now I probably couldn't remember ten things. I liked typing and shorthand. I loved going to those classes. I was fast on typing. Believe it or not, I got 105 words a minute. My mother always would say it is because you play piano, those fingers are all loosened up. I can type really fast, pretty accurate.

[My worst school experience] I think it was when we moved from (one school to another) after I had just settled into my second grade, three weeks or a month. My mother picked me up at school and said, "You are going to a new school and we have moved. We don't live where we did." I never knew it. I guess I was really stupid or not very observant, unless my mom was just really tricky or maybe they didn't

have that much stuff. Then going to Lindbergh and getting Ms. Robinson who was awful! Those kids were mean to me. You know, a new kid after you have already been established. They were awful! I didn't know any of them. One guy, Chuck Brown, we ended up in High School together. We remembered being at (the new school), of course I was the one that cried everyday. Ms. Robison tried to get me to shut up. She would say, "Just lay your head down then and cry." So I did. She would try to get me to shut up because she would let me take the cow bell and I would ring it all around the pre-fab and the kids would follow me. Teachers didn't go out to pick up their kids; they sent the cow bell girl. I would go around it two or three times and I would have the whole line behind me and we would walk up the pre-fab steps and in and then I would start crying again. I just hated it. I guess this Chuck Brown was about my only friend. We sat in this big reading circle and when he came, I pulled his chair out from under him. She (the teacher) made us both go to the coat closet because "We were going back to kindergarten!" -- All the way to kindergarten from second grade. I remember being in the coat closet and he was going to get his coat and he was going out. I said, "No, don't go out. She can't send us back to kindergarten! We're in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She can't do that! Just stay in here." Then I don't remember what happened. We didn't go to kindergarten, but I remember staying in there quite a little while!

[My experience with care, concern, and connection] Well, it is really chopped up from elementary, junior high, and high school. I really did hate elementary and I really loved, well I was scared in kindergarten too, I hated kindergarten, I loved first grade, hated elementary, really dreaded and hated middle school. I couldn't stand middle school. When I went to (high school) I loved high school. I think more kids, we had the largest graduating class, good grief, I think we had 800. When I went to (middle school) in all of my seventh grade classes, I don't know how this happened, but I didn't have anybody from John Paul Jones, nobody. However, in seventh grade I did meet my girlfriend, Teri. We haven't seen each other in three years but she sends cards all the time. Teri didn't come from John Paul Jones she came from (another elementary). That was the only good thing out of middle school. We were locker mates. Then, of course, going to (high school), more schools come in, all those feeders, so you get so many kids. I loved the football games. In high school I got to do the choices. In my junior year, I did all business so you have all that [in] common. As far as math, I only had ninth grade math, basic math and I never took another math course. That is why I had to take College Algebra twice. I never had any Algebra.

[My experiences with classmates] I had my six or eight girlfriends. Every weekend they were at my house spending the night or one of their houses spending the night. Then when we could drive we would go to

Sandy's and now it is Goldie's. Of course, we were all diet conscious. We were going to have our chef salads. The guy in back there knew we were there every – whatever night it was – so he would make our cheese into hearts or spell things with our cheese and then each girl, you know, “Oh my cheese says...whatever.” Then we went to Shotgun Sam's Pizza place. We went there a lot. Especially after all the football games we went there. I guess I had this one friend, Jane, and she had a stepmother. That was very different back then. We spent the night; you know this bunch of girls, at her house once. She would tell these awful stories about how mean this stepmother was. I was always wondering about her. I guess I did care about her wondering how she survived having a wicked stepmother. It sounded like what you would hear in the fairy tales because that was really different to me. She even had a dad and a brother, they all lived together. That is the only one I knew that had a stepmother.

[My ideas of my educative worthiness] I had a very pushy mother and she thought anything you wanted you could do it. Oh yes, you can look at my report cards. I was perfect in the usually does column. And I was. I never messed up, unlike my sister. I never, I mean I was probably too perfect and I don't know why I was too perfect. Now if I looked back and look at me, I would think she is trying too hard, why? I had to go to the dean at (middle school) because someone turned me in because I had static cling and I was wearing leotards. It was another

teacher and she was concerned that I was – what was that word she used, something about not a floozy but [something like that]. Because you know my skirt was sticking to my legs. She (the dean) made me take my leotards off to get rid of the static. Ms. Bewely, little short, as wide as she was short, [was a] little white haired lady. Oh, I just hated her. She was the Dean of Girls. I guess I did get in trouble once with Ms. Benson, it was ninth grade History. It was probably her last year to teach too. Anyway my girlfriend was sitting behind me, Lucille Smith. Ms. Benson had just told us to all be quiet, and (my friend) asked me something, I remember turning and I said, “No!” Well, because I said no, I had detention in Ms. Benson’s room. I forgot to tell my mom and dad so I went there after school and they wondered where I was. So my dad went up there, knocking on the door, and it was locked. Mr. Cox was the principal. I guess he [my dad] rattled that door enough and he wanted to know where Isabella was. They found me in Ms. Benson’s room. My daddy was not happy with Ms. Benson. He didn’t have words with her but he was not happy.

## **Joan**

Joan is 55 years old and Caucasian. She too lives in the same large urban area. She described her neighborhood as kind of mixed in terms of age. “It seems like when we moved in it was a lot of original owners and older people. It has been kind of fun because new families have moved in and it is

still a mix of ages.” She has always liked it for that reason. Her household includes her husband and two dogs. Joan has two sons. Her oldest is in graduate school. “[My oldest son] is 28 and he is finishing his Doctorate, we hope. We thought he would finish in May but he is off on some new research tangent. We think he will finish this fall.” Her youngest son is married and lives in Colorado. “[He] is 24 and he graduated [from college] a year ago. He is really enjoying his work with the USGS [United States Geological Services] and he wants to be able to advance.” Joan’s youngest son is going to start work on his Masters. “We are really thrilled about that because (his wife) is in school and I think they can really support each other if they are both in school.” Outside of teaching Joan is an active member of an educational sorority [Kappa]. “I like being with other teachers and it’s a social and very supportive group. I like that.” She also enjoys her church, although she is less involved than when her children were young. Joan is a member of the YWCA and enjoys swimming, even though, she sprained her ankle. “I really had a nice system going and I got off and can’t seem to get back with it. But, I haven’t given up my membership [at the YWCA]. I am going to keep trying.”

Like Ann, Joan did not start out necessarily to become a teacher. Joan had a wonderful teacher in high school, a foreign language teacher. “It just seemed that I [learned] French really well. I was going to major in foreign languages and go to work at the United Nations to change the world.” During her sophomore year, she ‘had a change of heart.’ “I had to sit down with myself and think it through. I just floated for awhile and did my required classes.” She

attributed the different thinking [about women's roles] of the times partly for her decision. "I knew I could become a teacher or a nurse, the traditional things. Business wasn't an option for me because I didn't feel I was very good with math. That was not my strength and I knew it." She does not come from a family of teachers, but said, "I loved school growing up so it was just a natural thing that I wanted to do." This is Joan's sixteenth year with (city name) Public Schools. For six years before that, she taught preschool at (a church).

"Actually, it was my husband and my father who said, if you are going to do this, you need to get paid for it. I had no benefits and the pay is not good, yet they wanted you to be degreed." She thought it was a wonderful work environment.

The preschool was upper middle-class. It was very small classes, nine or ten to one [adult] ratio. Then the two and three year olds were less than that per teacher. It was a very sharing community. The people that were there worked together very well. They just tried to provide a very calm, homey atmosphere. Everything was providing experiences for the total child. When I came to the public schools in 1991, it was right in the midst of Whole Language. For our level we were doing Whole Language there [at the preschool]. So I was so comfortable and I just moved right into that. I think it would have been very difficult for me to have gone into a school that didn't teach that way. (Her current school) just happened to be a nice flow. I have been there all 16 years. I have been associated with that school since 1985 when (my youngest son) was in kindergarten. When I started, they (her current school) were



trying to maintain a 50% non black population. They were trying to achieve a balance. At that time people from all over the city were asking for transfers and there was bus transportation for all of the families. The school is north of downtown (name of the city). It is located in a poor neighborhood. The neighborhood around the school has always been poor. I think children enjoyed school more then. I think the way we taught was more engaging for them. It was hard for me to change. I think if you gave them standardized tests you would say they are learning better now. But, do they love learning? Are they learning to be good decision makers, good thinkers and creative life-long learners? (The city name) Public Schools offered parents more choices. Then there were superintendents that did not want any one school to be special over others, all schools should have the programs. I think that people started having other choices and thinking do I want to have my children across town, or would they be just as well off in the neighborhood school? I think we traveled along for a lot of years on our reputation of being a quote good school. Then I think in the funding crisis we were barely making ends meet and programs were cut, it became less and less people transferring in. Now, I just see it as a neighborhood school. We have very few non black families transferring in and I miss that mix of the population. I think there was so much to be gained. Now with No Child Left Behind, there is so much funding and so much focus on trying to bring the struggling students up. That part of it, I

think is good, it needs to be addressed. I think we have lost so many programs and I heard we are losing Art next year. Well, you know, our school is very much in flux, transition, limbo, so who knows really. The neighborhood is high poverty, if you watch the news, high crime. I think that is another thing that hurts us now on attracting good teachers, if they look at the address and they drive to the neighborhood they think – do I feel safe here, do I want to teach here and I think that is sad. I feel safe there.

[The teacher who had the greatest impact on my life was] a high school English teacher, who was inspiring and encouraging. She is just one of those – you can set your mind to it, you can be what you want to be. I grew up in a very agricultural, small school, small community. Most people continued the farming tradition. It was common to get married out of high school and start your family. I just knew I wasn't going to do that. If you did go to college, you went to the one at Weatherford, like 45 minutes away, and you came home on the weekend. I knew I wasn't going to do that. My high school English teacher she just made English, composition, literature, she just made everything so interesting. In addition, she is one of those people that if she set her mind to something it is going to happen. She just went above and beyond. When I was a junior, she asked if anyone wanted to go on a study trip to Europe. Of course, we all raised our hands. We all wanted to do that. She organized it. When I was a senior, right after we graduated, we went for

six weeks. She was away from her family. Her husband had to be so supportive because she had young children. It was also a close knit community so there was lots of family around. Still that was a lot for her to do. I just thought she was the most wonderful person. Coming from a small community it enlarged my view of the world.

[My best teacher was] my English teacher. When I was in elementary school, I thought all of my teachers were wonderful. My favorite was my second grade teacher; in fact she is still living actually. She had jet black hair and she wore pink and I thought she was the most beautiful woman. At that time teachers dressed up they wore dresses. I remember she had this tree branch that she had chopped off and it was in a container. It was a homonym tree. That just fascinated me that there was a tree with words hanging off of it. That impressed me. My first grade teacher had taught since she was 16 years old. She had taught for over 50 years. I had her the last year she taught. The year she retired I got to have Ms. Thomas for first grade. She had taught everybody's fathers and uncles. It's terrible I don't remember so much about first grade. I remember that we rested in first grade. I remember Dick and Jane. I remember a little girl, that today we would say she needs another year. She came to first grade, her name was Janet. My mom tells me, when we would have rest time, I would lay beside her and pat her back because she cried all day. She wasn't ready for first grade.

[My worst teacher was] a high school teacher. He didn't like the community. He didn't like his job. He would always gripe about people, it was really not appropriate. He was supposed to be teaching us and it was his forum to gripe about things. It drove me crazy. I did learn a little bit in between. He didn't stay too long. A small community probably just wasn't his cup of tea.

[My best school experience was] when I was a junior and senior and going to the meetings to get ready for the trip. Going to meetings and reading to find out everything we could. When I was in high school, I was in chorus. We would go places and sing. That was always fun. I always liked the music and the plays. I really felt like I got a good education in a tiny school and if I wanted help I could always have help. It wasn't that my class was so big that I got lost in the crowd. One thing that did hurt me was that we never had an art teacher and formal art classes. So when I went to OSU and it was time for me to take my art courses, I struggled. I worked really hard for a C. That was one little hole in my background.

[My worst school experience was] when I was in middle school, and you know how you are in middle school. When my math teacher asked me what was wrong with me my brother was really good in math. I guess that was my worst.

[My experiences with my classmates] The same 22 children I started with in first grade, I think 18 of us graduated. When you got to

middle school it was like, [scrunched up her face]. When we were sophomores, we found out that another community school was being closed. Their students were going to come and be a part of our system. It was a big deal to make them feel welcomed. We were asked, "How would you feel if you were a senior and the school you had been to all your life was closed?" We were trying to make them feel welcomed. Actually, the class I graduated with was the largest graduating class ever; we had 44 because of this school closing. I thought it was pretty fun to have new people. You can get a little tired of each other.

[My experiences with care, concern and connection] The situation where the school was closing and we were trying to make them feel welcome. I think in a small community you don't think in terms of projects. If someone needs help, you just did. People in a small community have a feeling of we're in this together more so than in a city. You have to work together to get services.

[My feelings of my own educative worthiness] I loved school and maybe it was because I lived in the country and the closest people were over a half a mile away. School to me was just like Christmas. I got to be with other children. I always felt good about being at school. I think I felt good about myself as a student. In elementary I remember there were a couple of girls that were so smart. I thought well maybe I am not at the top but I am okay. In middle and high school, I really did not want to stay there (in the community). I really got the hang that if you work

hard, and this came from my home too, that you could be what you want to be. You just have to set your mind and work really hard at it. I wanted to go to college so I knew I wanted to do really good in school.

## **Renee**

Renee is 30 old and Caucasian. She also lives in the same large urban area that the rest of the participants inhabit. She described the neighborhood where she lives as family oriented and lower to middle class. She is single and has two dogs. Renee comes from a family of teachers. “My mother and my sister are both teachers. My grandmother taught a little and my aunt taught special education for a year and a half.” Although Renee is only in her seventh year of teaching, she has worked with children under the age of four since her ninth grade year in high school, which she said gave her a good background in early childhood. Her teaching career is augmented outside of her classroom. She tutors reading once a week during the school year. It is called Reading for Kids. She also works there Monday – Thursday during the summer, doing a reading camp and then individual tutoring. “The students are all mostly private school or home school students so they are all upper middle class.” She told me about some of the funny things they say. “One time one of my students told me I needed to go to the beauty shop and get my nails done because they just didn’t look good. Where I work my students never comment on my nails.” One day Renee wore a skirt and one of the tutored students said, “Oh, aren’t you Miss Fancy Pants.” Renee also enjoys photography. Lately, she has been

making books with photographs of her students. Mostly she likes spending time with family and friends. Renee knew she wanted to be a teacher since she was in the ninth grade, when a motivational speaker came to her school. “He was telling a story about a little kid learning to tie their shoes and how excited they were to learn something for the first time. I thought, oh, I want to do that. I want to be the one that gets them excited about learning.” After that she started working at the church nursery. “From that time on that is all that I have ever wanted to do is teach at the Early Childhood level.” She has taught in several different schools, the first was in a small nearby community and the other three have been in the city school system where she resides.

The first school was at (small community). The community is rural and upper middle class. The students were Caucasian with the exception of a couple of Native Americans. In (city name) I taught at (elementary school) which had more Hispanic students. It was probably half Hispanic, half Caucasian and a couple of African American students. The neighborhood was actually very nice, I’d say middle class. There is no lower income housing around that school. Then I taught at (another elementary – same district) for two years which is a lower income school. It has low income housing, trailer parks, and apartments. There were a lot of Hispanics as well, probably about half Hispanic, half Caucasian, and a few African Americans. A lot of the parents were on welfare. I know a lot of them were on food stamps. The school where I am now is (another elementary – same district). It is in a neighborhood with houses

which is maybe the lower middle class. There are two busses that pick up kids from lower income housing, trailer parks. Then one bus does pick up in a middle class neighborhood. The parents work at McDonalds or Wal-Mart. Several parents are in jail and the students live with grandparents, about three this year. I have some that live with their mother but they also live with their aunt and several people in the household. Most of my students come from two parent families. I only have one that comes from a single parent household. He is African American.

[The teacher that had the greatest impact on me] was my drama teacher in high school. I think I started with her in my ninth grade year. I had her for drama in ninth grade, tenth grade, eleventh grade, and then I had her for English my senior year. Anyway she inspired me because I was in drama and I was always kind of a shy person, she got me to get out of my shell more than I probably would have. I think getting up on stage and having to speak louder helped me not be so shy around other people. Also, having to get up and do those impromptu things, just to be able to be silly in front of other people and not be worried about what they thought. I loved my teacher in Kindergarten. I don't really remember talking to her. I remember her doing story time or telling us how to paint. One time, we acted out *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. I remember two boys always bugging me everyday and her getting on to them.



[My best teacher was] I would have to say (high school drama teacher) when I had her for English my senior year. I was never a very strong reader or writer, I was always afraid that everything would be misspelled. She encouraged me to not be scared and put it on paper. She was someone you talked to if you had a problem. If you did not do well you could always go and talk to her.

[My worst teacher was] a math teacher who was not very good. I don't really remember him. I just remember I didn't understand the way he tried to explain how to do things. Most of the class didn't follow him. I guess he had taught so long he didn't think he needed to explain everything out in detail like a new learner would need. I don't think I was in his class for very long. I think he retired towards the beginning of the year or something and we got switched around. My worst teacher was a math teacher in high school. She was Algebra, on the third floor, with short hair and I don't remember her name. She would yell and throw things at students like erasers and staplers. She spoke badly about my brother one time over a situation she didn't know anything about. She didn't say it to my class she said it to another class and they came and told me what she said. She did throw things and yelled. I kept quiet and stayed out of her view.

[My school experiences] Overall, they were all positive. My first year of first grade I did not enjoy it. I had headaches a lot and I didn't want to be there basically. I think I wasn't ready. I loved Kindergarten; it

was just a half day. In first grade I just wasn't ready to sit in a desk all day and do all that paper work and listening. I just wanted to be home.

[My experiences with my classmates] I have always gotten along with everyone even if it was not someone that was my best friend or friend outside of school. I always got along with people. Even in high school I would have friends who were just my friends at school, I didn't really talk to them outside of school. Everyone has always liked me. I never made anyone mad or tried to hurt anyone's feelings. I have one friend from high school that I have stayed in contact with. I met her when I was a junior. I have another one I have known from middle school I keep in contact through email. I have one from college, my roommate that I still keep in contact.

[My experiences with care, concern, and connection] The thing I can think of showing care probably is making pictures for my friends in elementary school, drawing pictures for them, some even in middle school. To make them happy, cheer them up, or let them know I was thinking of them. Of course, concern when they were not there, calling them to see how they were. (My high school drama and English teacher) is the only one I can think of that really cared how I did, how I preformed, what I did in class. I think having her for four years made a feeling of connection. I was with her over and over again. She got to see me develop into a stronger more out-going person than when I first started.

Oh yes, Mr. B, my gym teacher in elementary school. He was a nice fun person to be around. We always enjoyed going to his class. Sometimes instead of playing soccer outside he would sit with us and pick the weeds to make them into necklaces and hair things. He had a daughter our age and I think he understood. I was friends with his daughter in fourth grade. I always enjoyed going to gym from first grade on. He cared, I believe that he cared about me and I cared about him. He would pick me first to play games. I remember one time, it was outside of school, his daughter had a slumber party and he did more of the activities than her mom did. There was something about whoever went to sleep first was going to get a prize in the morning. I did! And I got the box of chocolates. Then I couldn't find my socks or shoes and all the girls were going to go out and play. They all left me, but he stayed back and helped me find my stuff so I could go play with them until our parents came to get us.

[My feelings of my own educative worthiness] in elementary school I thought that I wasn't very smart and I didn't know what the other kids knew. I was in special education classes. I thought that I would never be able to spell because even when I would take my tests in the special education class, occasionally another special education student gave it to me. Therefore, whatever the word they would say, I would spell. Sometimes it wasn't the word they were supposed to say so I would get it wrong. I remember in my fourth grade year I stopped going

to special education because I was not learning anything from it. I didn't get any more individual attention. She would just say if it was a workbook, "Go sit down and read it again, read it again." I would just make up excuses why I couldn't go. I don't think I thought I was a very good student until end of seventh grade, eighth grade year. That is when I realized a lot of people can't spell and a lot of people have problems reading out loud. I could always read to myself just fine. But when I had to read out loud I would mess up words and switch them around, all kinds of stuff. I think I realized it wasn't just me that was having those problems. I could do what everyone else was doing. I found my paper work that my mom kept about all of my IEP meetings and I didn't even know that was going on because I did not go to any special education pullout classes. I felt like a normal kid.

## **Marie**

Marie is 28 years old and she is Caucasian. She lives in another area of the same large urban city, which she described thus, "Caucasian, Hispanic, and African Americans. I think all races live here." When Marie moved in to her neighborhood, it resembled an older family community. "But now there are about five families with children that have moved in. Within the last couple of years a big Hispanic population. It is a nice quiet neighborhood." She lives in a house with her husband and two children, a nine-year-old daughter, a seven-year-old son, and their little miniature Chihuahua, Princess. Marie comes from

a family of teachers. Her grandmother and aunt have been teachers and her mother and sister are teaching now. Although she likes kids, Marie did not start of with the intention of becoming a teacher. “Originally, I wanted to be in the FBI but I had a family and I did not feel that would be safe so I chose teaching. I thought it would be fun to help young children learn.” When she is not teaching she is involved in a number of activities with her family and children. “I am an assistant leader in Boy Scouts with my sons Den.” She also coaches an Odyssey of the Mind Team an enrichment competition for gifted and talented students. The teachers are mainly there for supervision. “The team has a theme they have to follow. The children have to make up a play all on their own, costumes and props and then they have to perform it at a competition with other grade school teams.” She is a Girl Scout Leader with her daughter’s troop. Marie has been teaching for two and a half years, kindergarten and pre-k.

My first year was at (lower socio-economic school), the population was African American with the exception of one little White girl in my class. Some of them were lower income and some were lower income working class families. The area around the school was scary. It was like a – not really a ghost town because there were businesses and stuff – but the neighborhood around the school had big dogs and scary looking people. I didn’t really see any crime, but I have heard on the news lately that there have been a lot of shootings in that area. Now I teach at (another elementary) school, it is in the west (part of the city), in

a neighborhood, kind of secluded, quiet. I feel safe there. My class is very diverse in the population. I have poor, working poor, and middle class. I have about six African Americans, Seven Native Americans, and the rest of them are Caucasian, which would be seven.

[The teacher that had the greatest impact on me was] my LD [Learning Disability] teacher in middle school. She was kind, friendly, and loving. I think she was always encouraging and told me how smart and beautiful I was. I think that is when I really started liking school.

[My best teacher was] (The LD teacher) you could tell that she cared by the way she took her time and showed me respect.

[My worst teacher] I do not remember her name but it was probably fourth grade math at (name of elementary school). She wasn't that great. She was kind of mean and hateful. She had centers in her room and when you finished your math work for that day you got to go to center. After about a month of never getting to go to centers, I used to just turn in my work and say I was done and go to centers, then she would yell at me when I did that.

[My best school experience was] in first grade with our spelling words. We used to write them on a blank piece of paper and we used to draw pictures that went along with them. I thought it was neat and it helped me learn the words. The drawing helped me connect with the words.

[My worst school experience was] getting in trouble with (teacher's name). She used to seek me out in the crowd. She would leave the room and tell us to get busy. We were busy and someone would be talking when she came in and she would say, "Marie you are in trouble." I would miss recess or inside games. It happened daily.

[My experiences with my classmates] I think they were good. They got better in fifth grade and I started enjoying school. Nothing was different I just got older and I was able to do the work better. I had friends, we got along. I never had a whole bunch of friends but the kids I was friends with we were very close.

[My experiences with care, concern and connection were) I have to go back to (the LD teacher's) class because we would always do different learning activities and stuff. She would split us up into teams but it was no big deal, because we were more or less competing against ourselves. Everybody would cheer everybody on and be happy about them doing their work and getting it right. It was a smaller classroom so we could really get to know everybody. There were four or five [students] in there and we were all friends.

[My feelings of my own educative worthiness] I didn't like math very much. I didn't like spelling. I did like reading. I didn't feel so smart. I do like those subjects now. I don't think I really liked math until college, well not even college, the last two semesters of college. My last two semesters of math class, I had a professor who was able to explain it

better. I do not know, she just really liked math. I think that is what made the difference. She really enjoyed math. She liked teaching it. There was something contagious about her. I liked math too but I never really understood it that well. So even though I had her for three semesters, the first one I passed but I didn't do as great as the last two. Like in Geometry I made an A. In high school I never did take Geometry because I didn't think I could do it.

## **Reese**

Reese is 38 years old and Caucasian. She too lives in the same urban community as the other research participants. She lives in an area that is right in the middle of (city name) in an older neighborhood known as midtown. Reese is a single parent of one child. "So there are two of us, two girls. My daughter is nine." Her grandmother who is no longer living was a teacher. Her cousin was also a teacher but she is a stay at home mom now. "My maternal grandmother taught kindergarten. She helped write the curriculum for (city name) Public when it [kindergarten] was first started. That was around the 1950s." Reese like Ann, Joan, and Marie had not always known she wanted to be a teacher. Reese told me she went through those phases of wanting to be a trash man when she was very young to the Archeologist. "Physical Therapy is what I thought I wanted to go into when I was in high school. I guess I found out where the programs were and it was kind of difficult to go to school for that." She did start her basics out with Physical Therapy in mind, so she had a lot of



the science background which included Biology, Anatomy and Physiology. Then she changed her mind. "The school I was going to opened up four year degrees and you could get it in teaching or business. I didn't have to move far away [from family] to get my degree and that probably had something to do with it." Reese's goal in mind for the Physical Therapy was to work with children so she still had that [as a teacher]. When not teaching or taking care of her daughter, she is attending graduate school. "Right now that [graduate school] is my big involvement, which leaves little time for anything else. I am pursuing a Master's in Library Information Studies. I am going to work as a library media specialist in a school setting." She is transferring to a new school this year to become their library media specialist. "There is more diversity in that [new] school. There are 60% Caucasian, 20% African American, and I think there is about, they have a higher Native American population and then there is about 9% Hispanic." Reese has been a teacher (in the public school) for 11 years. Prior to being hired in the public elementary school where she is currently teaching, she spent one year teaching as a substitute. "Another year I was at Ms. Deb's [a private school] with three year olds, I guess that was a teaching environment."

I taught in the junior school which was the three year olds. Of course, the members were paying members, so you probably would get into the upper middle class. We had 12 to 13 children. There were four teachers so we each had about 12 to 13 students and we rotated them through. Each teacher taught a discipline, I was creative movement.

There were a story and science teacher and a music teacher and an art teacher. The students spent 30 minutes each day with each teacher. The rest of the day, we had lunch time, rest time, a couple of play times outside. After that I was subbing at lots of different schools with lots of different age levels. The populations were varied on that. It was a reality check. It was a good experience in classroom management, classroom control, probably more different in that situation but it gave me good ideas to use for later on. Also, ideas of where I would fit, my likes and dislikes what I wanted to do. It helped me see we are not all the same. We do not all serve the same population of children. Your PTA base your money base of what is coming into the school is different from school to school. Even the morale of teachers is not the same from school to school. I subbed for (a smaller district) a little bit too. There weren't as many schools to go to. I would say there was not as much diversity there. I have been at (current school) for 11 years. I have seen a change in that population too. The magnet status drew in a lot more cultures. Now we are pretty much serving the neighborhood population. We have a lot of transfers but they are not different in their economic status and the race [African American] is all the same pretty much now. About five years ago it started changing, when we lost the magnet status and you don't have the name to go with it, (city name) is big on names. I still don't think there are that many choices. There are only four choices out of how many, 40 schools. As a parent applying, I know there were

over 500 applications to (name of magnet school) alone. I am not really sure why we lost ours [magnet school status]. There is a demand for it because you have the name to go with it, you've got extra funding to go with it, there is something special about it when you call yourself a magnet school. I think people want difference. Not all people do, but the transfer people do. I have taught second grade math and science. I taught third grade, not self-contained, but all subjects and I've taught pre-k. When I taught third grade we leveled our instruction and we switched them around for leveled instruction in reading and math. Your homeroom, social studies and science would stay the same. [Now] I have 17 children and that has been fairly consistent for the last few years. There are two adults an assistant and me. Many people think that sounds good but when you are serving a population that is high-poverty, they have many needs. It sounds good on paper but you still cannot give the children the time they need one on one.

[The teacher that had the biggest impact on me was] I moved around a lot when I was younger. My first grade teacher, I can think of him as very kind. It was a man so that probably was one of the reasons that I remember him so well. He was very nice. He reminds me of (our music teacher). He had a lot of patience. I think he spoke softly to us. He had a lot of patience and a lot caring and understanding. He let us call him Tom. I remember his last name. There is no reason we could not call him by his last name it was (teacher's name). If that stuck in my

mind, his thing was we wouldn't be able to pronounce it or it would be too difficult so just call me Tom. Remember this was back in the '70s too. He had that '70s look, longer hair and maybe a beard. That is all I can remember. He was the only male teacher I have ever had besides higher education, or maybe math or physical education in high school. I can remember a few that were not so great. I do not know how that made an impact.

[My best teacher was] Tom he was one of them. I did enjoy a fifth grade teacher who was very stern with us. We knew our boundaries. We knew our limits. She was always saying, "I am going to pinch a plug out of you!" But you knew that was just her way of telling you to stop. That was in Arkansas. We always took it that she was going to get us but she never did. The structure was there, we knew what our expectations were. We knew where our boundaries were. We probably felt safe in that environment knowing that this is the way we were all going to conduct the whole year, our behavior and otherwise. High expectations, if you got out of line you knew it. I mostly remember the feelings. She would read to us, *Old Yeller* and things like that. I don't remember a lot of the learning.

[My worst teacher was] I remember a second grade teacher I had who, I guess I talked a lot, who came over and jerked my arm. She had massive rings on her fingers and ended up scratching me. That was in Tennessee. That was not a very good school in my opinion. It was open

design. I think that is when open design first came about in Tennessee. We had three classes in one room. It was just not very good. I remember writing a poem one time and not understanding it had to be written just like she showed us on the board. Either my writing was too big and would go off the line. I remember having to rewrite that poem like five times, staying in from recess because she wasn't explaining it correctly to me. I didn't understand. My words were exactly the same as the words but I had the constraints of the paper to deal with and I did not understand that. I remember not finding that very fun. I just remember her telling me you write it how it looks but no real explanation of what I was doing wrong.

[My best school experience was] probably in first grade in California. What made it so enjoyable was I guess just the feelings I associated with it.

[My worst school experience] that was the second grade teacher's class. I had quite a few different experiences. I started high school in a very rural area with just a few children. I did like that. I guess it was just knowing everyone that was there and feeling like a close knit community. It was very small. The graduating class was maybe 50 or so. Then I moved to Checotah, Oklahoma and that is difficult when you are a teenager. They had their little cliques and it was very difficult to get in.

[My experiences with classmates] It changed for me because I changed so many different schools. You know, I have friends that say,

“We’ve known each other since kindergarten.” Well that’s not the case for me because I have moved so much. You just made friends and lost friends and you just go on. I haven’t really stayed in touch with even my high school friends. I didn’t live in a dormitory or anything, so I didn’t make a lot of close knit relationships in college. It was pretty much on my own, doing my own thing. Our [graduating] class is not very well organized and they tend to lump all the classes together so I haven’t been to a high school reunion. I might go if they did one for just our class but so far they haven’t been able to get enough people together to do that.

[My experiences with care, concern, and connection] I did with the first grade and the fifth grade. Third grade, that was a year that I moved and so you don’t have [the opportunity to get to know people that well]. That was just a really hard time. Sixth and seventh grade I don’t think there is really that much of that there because you travel and you don’t really get to know your teachers as well so you don’t feel that sense of connectivity with them. Of course, there was another move in seventh grade. I have been to a lot of schools. There was a move in seventh grade and another move in tenth grade. So I wouldn’t say there was a whole lot of connection with teachers. Now in college I did have some instructors that I really... I went to a small private college, after the other one. I guess I made my own move then. But when I went to the smaller private college I found that very enjoyable because I knew my instructors

one on one. Our classes were about the ratio of twenty to one. So you could get additional help or we even went to one of our instructors houses making paper Mache. It was an early childhood class. You had some of your same professors once you get to the higher end of it. Some of the same professors were teaching several of the different courses.

[My feelings of my educative worthiness] I think that's family based, as far as, my family values. My parents saying, "You are good at this." I think I had to remember more of them giving me those values or making me feel worthy as a student. In Checotah, I learned my senior year that the year before, I should have been in the top ten, but one of the well-knowns was put in the top ten so I did not get the recognition for it. At that point in time, I wasn't reaching my highest potential. I didn't want to take the harder English classes. I knew I was college bound but I guess I was in play mode. I did have fun a little too much fun probably. That high school class, I don't know, it was just a mess. We didn't get to take our senior trip. I guess we were not very well behaved students. It was said at the beginning we are just not going anywhere. We are not taking you on a trip.

## The teacher participant's voice – stories of the present

Through the sharing of their own school experiences, I began to see what this diverse group of teachers was all about. They don't really remember much about the learning that took place when they were growing up. What they do remember is the feelings and emotion that they had in the experiences that revolved around particular teachers or a particular classroom or a particular school.

While conducting the personal her-story Interviews, I also asked questions about their current teaching assignments. I asked them to share their thoughts and ideas on a number of different areas that pertain to teaching. Each participant was very candid about what occurs in their thoughts and in the real lived experiences of their classrooms each day. Again in an effort to ensure that the reader will be able to obtain a clear picture of the teachers who participated in this research, I will strive to keep their words in tact as much as possible.

### **Ann**

[The most fulfilling part of my teaching experience] It has to be when that light comes on. I really cannot see myself not teaching. I am going to have to come to terms with it. If that is all that defines me, well so be it, because that's what it is. That's what I am. I have this little boy, he is so smart, and his name is Raja, so beautiful. He has been writing his letters slanting the wrong way. I teach D'Nealian handwriting. I love



it. You have to slant to the right. I am left handed so if I can do it everybody else can. Today we were doing this teacher directed lesson. I had these little spirals and we were doing this little 'Ho,' said the wind. I was teaching them how to do quotation marks. I said, (whispering voice) "Raja, you have to turn your paper this way," and I showed him how to hold a pencil again. All of a sudden it just clicked. He said, "Oh...no wonder I have been making those letters wrong!" Oh it was so cute, an epiphany, he just changed it, he did it! He said, "I've been holding the pencil wrong. I haven't had my book turned." To me, those little teensy small things, the little click and the light come on and having these little accomplished readers at the end of the year. It's a small thing. My autistic student I feel like I have really accomplished something with him. He could go to an MR [Mental Retardation] class, but I don't want him to go there.

[The most discouraging part of my teaching experience] right now, all this NCLB [No Child Left Behind] stuff, talk about draining the life out of somebody, it is very discouraging. A challenge this year is putting my lesson plans on the computer. I mastered it and I am not very computer oriented even though we have one at home. I have never been very interested in it; I would rather read or watch T.V. My principal [pulled] me into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He wants everything on the computer. The part of me that likes to relate to me says no I'd rather not. I don't feel like I have been really discouraged. I have been lucky enough to work with people,

and (school name) has special walls or something, it has always had really nice faculties, nice people to work with. The thing that has bothered me the most about NCLB is they acted like we weren't doing what we were supposed to be doing and that we didn't care for those children. Public education is the answer. I very strongly believe in public education, helping people.

[An outsider looking in would describe my classroom environment like this] I still have to let go of some of my rigid ways. I think they would see a very safe haven type place where learning is free to go on. I have worked very hard, you know, we have studied this brain friendly environment, but I think we have been doing it all of our lives. For women, I think, it's easier because everybody just knows you have to have plants around, fresh air, and sunshine. When I think about how hard these little babies work anymore. They just love it, even the structured things you do. If you don't do it, they want you to do it. The little babies that we have really need structure more than most children do. I am that way too; I want to know what you expect of me. I have an exercise bike in my room they love to get on. I got it originally for my boys, it is supposed to help them learn how to read and with hyper-activity. I have my stuff around all the time, I have had a few things broken, but generally they are very careful.

[My teaching strengths are] I am really good at teaching reading. Whatever it takes to teach somebody to read, that is what I will do. I

have taught so many different reading plans you wouldn't believe. I can glean from Shirley English, Saxon Phonics, and Economy that was one of the best. That was in the 60s when I started teaching here and (city name) system was premier. I think it still is. I hope that another strength would be that I am very nurturing. I think they know they are free to learn.

[My teaching weaknesses are] Who wants to admit that they have weaknesses? I don't like bookkeeping and stuff as much as I, you know, grading and stuff. I wouldn't consider it a weakness because I have to do it. But, I don't like to do it. I like assessments because they are very insightful. Probably, organizational skills, I know where everything is, but I have a lot of stuff. I used to go to every workshop I could get my hands on if they were going to give me free manipulative(s). I have been very frustrated with the deal about getting rid of all your clutter. A lot of that is just materials you need to have on hand to teach and for learning.

[In my current classroom there is evidence of care, concern, and connection] is just on-going, endless, from teeth falling out, to having to tie their pants up because they are too big. Just knowing when something horrible is going on at home and you are the only one that is there for them...getting them extra clothes. I have ordered some books on bullying and we were talking about them today. We were talking about princesses and they all have blue eyes and blonde hair, little (Latosha) who has been so eager to learn this year, said, "Not all people

have blue eyes.” Here, her eyes are just as black as mine are. They do care for each other. We had some Down syndrome children and they would just take them by their little hands and take them out on the playground. Nobody told them to do that. They knew they [special needs students] needed extra care. That again is something you have to work at all the time, because I have a real snotty little girl in my class, she is probably lacking in something she needs, her mother may treat her that way. She wasn’t born that way; she had to learn it somewhere. I do see my classes each year making a connection with each other. We do work on it all the time. We play London Bridge is Falling Down and talk about ‘You are Special and Unique.’ I think I do have a very warm nurturing room. Those fourth grade students I tutor they come into my room and say I would like to be first grade again. I thought well it probably is a lot less stressful. I think we should carry all this through to middle school. I swear we would have better students. They still need care and nurturing at that age.

### **Isabella**

[The most fulfilling part of my teaching experience is] when they become the little readers, that’s fulfilling. Then lately, at this time of my life, [it is] when they come back to visit you. Then not just the visits, [also] when you hear from a parent. I had a little girl in developmental first grade at (previous school); actually two of them are teachers.

(Student's name), she taught English at (high school) and she went to (magnet high school). When I left (previous school), she left [too] and went to (present school) at the same time as I did. That is really neat that she teaches English. Then (teacher's name) also taught at (previous school) and I had her daughter. Her daughter is a teacher for the deaf in Texas. I had (student's name) my first year to teach at (current school) and she was in my fourth grade class. Her mom teaches at (name of elementary school). She told me about two or three years ago that [her daughter] is a teacher. Then even this year one of my kids we were going around the circle and something came up and she said, "I am going to be a teacher like you." So that makes you feel good, like you are doing something right. When they have successes and you hear about it when they are older. Like that Jordan Hill, he did not get it, and here he is studying journalism and he looked really put together and he is 22.

[The most discouraging part of my teaching experience] would be (student's name). I had her in third grade my first year at (current school). She is in prison and she got that Masonic award her fifth grade year. She was selected to attend a program called math counts at (the university). They took six or eight kids from (current school) and (student's name) was one of those kids. She was just wonderful and you just knew she was going to do great things. Then she killed that baby, her own. That is the saddest. No I have a couple of other sad

ones too. (Student's name), I was watching the news, she was my first year I taught at (previous school), she was at a convenience store out North and she was in a telephone booth and she just was shot. Her mother is the one that heads up all those...well you know Mother's Against...kid's that get shot or some kind of violence. Then there was that girl they set on fire. I cannot remember her name but she was a (previous school) girl. I did not have Mario, at (previous school), he was a first grader and I taught developmental first. But it was Friday; I remember getting all over him on the playground about something because he was a mess! Then that Saturday he was playing Russian roulette and had it [the gun] in his mouth and he shot and killed himself. That was my first kid funeral and they had an open casket and they had just molded his...I remember I just stood there staring...it was just like brown clay and it was all creasy but they had built his face back up. That one bothered me. Then there are some they do not really bother you because you know what is coming, (student's name), (student's name), my second year at (previous school), Jerry Moore. That is when they had big afros, something was wrong with him and that was just my second year so I wasn't really sure. He would lick the bottom of his boots cleaning them! He would just do crazy things. He cut a big hunk of his Afro out and put white Elmer's glue and it was all dripping down. I was always telling Jerry Moore stories. Then my cousin was working at the prison in Hutchison, Kansas and she called me. I was at (current

school) then, so Jerry would have been 18, 19, or 20. They had just checked in a Jeremiah Moore. She said, "He's from (city name). It has to be that Jerry Moore." It was. I could have told you in first grade. I know people don't believe me but I could write a list of names and probably get up to 25 who are in prison or have been killed. That is one a year of my teaching career!

[An outsider looking in would describe my classroom environment as] busy, we are very busy. We are not quiet...only plants grow quietly, lots of movement from one area to the other area, change of pace every 15 to 20 minutes. Lots of encouragement, I am always building them up, constantly building them up. I have this little, Jerome, and he has been awful. One day, he did get a green light. He finally made it through. I was bragging at 10 am. If I see someone in the hall, I'm bragging. I called his mother at noon, "He made it through the morning." The kids are all hearing this. It was the second day when the principal came to observe me and I bragged on Jerome while she was in there. Some kids yelled out, "Yeah, this is his second day and he is probably going to get a green light!" I said, "Yes, we are so happy for Jerome!" I've turned them into little cheerleaders, I guess. He didn't make it the third day...two days is all he could muster.

[My teaching strengths are making] connections I think. I do know how to connect math, to reading, to...and I don't just have a lesson on contractions, I can find it when we are doing our math. Constantly,

through the course of the day even when we are in the hall I am connecting with whatever lesson to keep building and building to show them it is not just that little 15 minutes in the book or that 15 minute little spiel I did. Then I see them doing that too making connection with real life stuff. I can feel...like I know in advance are they ready for this lesson we are about to have, you know, control wise. Then I can just flip it around.

[My teaching weaknesses are] I don't like to follow the scope and sequence in a book. I veer from that often. But I go back and I catch up. I don't like sequential things like that. I like to be flexible. I am glad they started talking about the life skill of flexibility because that is me. Like today, we were supposed to practice a letter K. I even had that rainbow paper in my hand. Ms. Jordan came in and she had been working with the third grade and they're doing some kind of little Indian theme. She had these turkey feather fans, and she had her little Indian necklace and this and that. She wanted to know if she could share with my kids. She shared and this was a day we wouldn't do journal because we practice our handwriting. So after her little talk, I shucked the writing lesson and we brainstormed a few words we would need to write about what Ms. Jordan had talked about...turkey feathers, turquoise, necklace, etc. and we wrote. That is not the letter of the day that is supposed to be on Tuesday if you look at Scott Foresman. I will catch it up.



[In my current classroom there is evidence of care, concern, and connection] I try to model care. Lately I have been getting a lot of new children so we are going back to that stuff at the beginning where we learn their names. Then I am pairing them up with someone in the lunchroom so they will have someone to eat with and they won't feel left out. Someone designated to play with them on the playground. My newest little girl is kind of like a little zombie girl. I have had to really build her up so some of my stuck up little girls will want to be her friend. Like today, Lakeisha is just like Miss Cheerleader, I can just see her in high school she is so stuck up. I am like Lakeisha you are standing so nicely, you just go on to lunch and I am going to let you take Tamarsha. She had that little look on her face, and then yeah, and she took her. You have to kind of push those kinds of things. I do not think Lakeisha has that feeling of care yet but I am hoping she will. I have had to jumble up my seating arrangements. I am running out of seats because some just can't take it. I have one special education kid and really they have accepted him pretty well. They could make fun of his speech because he is just awful to understand, nobody does. Because really they can understand him it's amazing sometimes better than I can.

**Joan**

[The most fulfilling part of my teaching experience is] when I see a child gets it, when they start reading, or when we have been working on

math concepts and they say oh I can do this. When I see them start to take off, I just think that is the best.

[The most discouraging part of my teaching experience is] the children that are not doing well and they are not getting supported at home. You keep trying to provide experience, trying to get them interested in learning and the behavior problems. I think those wear on you. I think this is the time they really need to get their basics and they need to feel good about school and be excited and want to be there. It doesn't always happen.

[An outsider looking in would describe my classroom environment as] busy, and active. I try to keep the kids moving and incorporate that movement into lessons. I think that people would say that it is a nice place to be.

[My teaching strengths are] I try to provide hands on experiences and incorporate movement, songs, rhymes, poetry and things like that into the lessons. Although, we do more of that paper, pencil than when I first started teaching.

[My teaching weaknesses are] sometimes I try to do too much and I think a slower pace might be nicer. I tend to over plan and then feel like they are not keeping up. Sometimes I think the kids clocks are running slower than mine. I think we are on different time zones.

[In my current classroom there is evidence of care, concern and connection] just since Christmas, I noticed that when they do not have

work to do they are asking to go partner read. They say, "Look Ms. Harris, we are having a reading group." There will be four or five of them all reading together. I see them supporting each other. I know who the children are who are kind of snooty about their abilities. The struggling readers don't necessarily go to them to read with. We just did the Pennies for Patients. They were very sharing with their pennies. Every once in a while a child would say, "Now, why are we doing this?" The others would say, "Don't you know." They were explaining it to each other. I think they really understood they were trying to help children that were sick and needed help. Sometimes when my children are kind of struggling, the others are saying, "Ms. Harris, so and so needs help." So they are aware of the need. When someone gets hurt outside they help them get to a teacher or walk them to the nurse. Even though it is hard for them to put themselves in someone else's place, I think it is worth teaching in a sense and encouraging, doing a project, talking about it because they might not get that modeled at home. If we want them to care about others, I think it is worth going through the project and talk about. When we counted our pennies it turned into a math lesson. We were putting a hundred pennies in each bag. We had ten bags and the students were saying, "We did really well." They were feeling good about it.

## **Renee**

[The most fulfilling part of my teaching experience is] I really like seeing the progress the students have made from when I first get them, even to the middle of the year and to the end of the year. How they've grown and how they've learned, and things they have picked up like problem solving. Things that I don't think they get at home. If they didn't come to school, they would still be arguing over little things. Now they say, "Oh, we need to sit down and talk about it to figure out what we are doing." I like to see their social skills developing, seeing how smart they are and letting them know how smart they are. Not letting them feel like they can't do it. Even if they are doing it wrong, as long as they are doing their personal best they are doing great!

[The most discouraging part of my teaching experience] that is the parents. Today I had to send home some retention letters just suggesting they might want to do another year in kindergarten. I know I am going to have one parent who is not going to want to do that and I am really not looking forward to that conversation with him. I think mostly parents who may not agree with what I say or how I feel. I have one parent whose child is disruptive every day, always in trouble. I have talked to the parent and talked to the parent. Today he [the disruptive child] tells me his mom is going to take him to the toy store and buy him some toys. I am thinking, I just talked to your mom yesterday about your behavior did she not talk to you about that. No, she is just going to buy

him some toys to make it all better I suppose. That's discouraging to know that and she has come to me before to ask what should I do? I have given her suggestions and told her what I do in the classroom but nothing seems to change with him. He is always the same. We have good behavior field trips and he didn't get to go on the last one. I guess she wasn't happy about that. She called the school and wanted to know why he didn't get to go. I had sent home letters, of course, he doesn't take home a lot of his work, and I find it stuffed under shelves and in the trashcan. I tell her and I try to get it out and give it to her as often as I can. I can't always be digging through the trashcan looking for his work and notes to take home. It seems like they don't care. He is an only child. He is the only one at home, he is really not causing that big of a problem [at home] by himself. Actually, I heard about the pre-k teacher from last year trying to talk to his mom every day about his behavior and his mom would just say she doesn't know what she is talking about. That kind of discouraged me this year from talking to her every single time he has a bad day because I know she isn't going to do anything about it. I don't want to waste my breath trying to tell her about it. So I just wait once a month to tell her about his behavior. There is always that student that talks so loud and constantly and you can't figure out a way to get him to be quiet so that I can talk.

[An outsider looking in would describe my classroom environment] sometimes it is very calm, quiet, organized and just flowing the right way.

Sometimes it is loud and it may not look like they are making sense of what they are doing in their centers. They would really have to ask the child what they are doing to know what they are doing. It was getting kind of loud in my room today because I have a lot of assessments to do and I couldn't hear their response. So I rang my little bell and told everyone to put their head down I have something to tell you. [Laughter] I have restrooms in my room and you could hear this little boy back there just singing as the toilets flush not knowing the whole class is listening to him.

[My teaching strengths are] I try not to do the exact same thing every year. I do the same topic but in a different way because sometimes an idea just pops into my head and I have to do it. I am creative and I think of creative ways to teach lessons or concepts or skills. Last year the kids were really good at using the word wall when they did their journals. This year they were not so good at using the word wall so we've made word wall folders for each individual student. Each student has one and they can write in words or I will write in words that they want to know how to spell, words that would be on your typical kindergarten word wall.

[My teaching weakness is] sometimes I think my weakness is discipline. Some years I think I have it down. Other years I don't know what I am doing wrong. Not necessarily classroom management, but how to get a student to want to do the right thing. The Thinking Chair I

don't think that always works for me because I am not consistent enough about having them tell me what they need to do different.

[In my current classroom there is evidence of care, concern, and connection] we have been working on the life skills and using them in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Our main one right now is problem solving and getting them to talk to the other person to see what the situation really is so they can hear the other side and not just automatically say, "I'm going to tell!" Half the time they just want to tell and they don't know why they are telling because they haven't figured out what the problem is. We have sharing time when they get to share about themselves or someone else in the room or someone at home. They can do appreciations of other students. In the past, they have made posters of themselves so that they can show people what they like to eat and what they like to do. This helps the other students see what they have in common. I hug my students when it's appropriate I am silly with my students. I am not always teacher, teacher, teacher. All of the time I get down on the floor and do activities with them. I don't think a lot of the other teachers in my building do that. I get down there and get dirty with them. When someone gets hurt, they run over and make sure they are okay. Depending on the hurt, they ask if they can take them to the nurse. When someone is absent for a long time they ask about them. Where is so and so? I wonder what he is doing or if he is sick? They do get excited and encourage each other with words like, Oh, you

did it or that is a good drawing. I have had an emotionally disturbed student that my class had to adjust to, that he acts differently and he does things differently than they do. As the year went on, they were able to be more of a friend and to know how to play with him so he doesn't get upset. This year I have a student whose hand is not fully developed. At the beginning of the year the students were scared of him and asked him what was wrong with his hand. Now they know, when someone else who is not in my class asks, they just say everyone is different and stick up for him. He really doesn't have that problem anymore they just all treat him like he is not any different than anyone else. I have heard them stick up for him when somebody else asks a question. At first they did treat him differently. We talked about it a lot. I think they just realized that everyone is different, not everyone is going to be the same or be able to do the same stuff. A lot of it at the beginning was kind of him when they would go to the playground, and I guess that he did it to say I know that I am different, but he would always be the monster. He would run up to kids and say, "I'm the monster." I think my kids took it, oh, your hand is different you're the monster. I think he was just trying to get a way to bond to just say yeah I know. He doesn't play that anymore. But it was bad if another teacher heard they would say, "They are calling him a monster." Well, he calls himself a monster that is what they play on the playground.



## Marie

[The most fulfilling part of my teaching experience is] when the kids know they are learning, when they finally get it. Because then you know you have actually taught them something. It is usually not until the end of the year, but it helps you know they actually do understand what you are trying to get them to learn.

[The most discouraging part of my teaching experience is] I think not having the money to provide some of the experiences I want to provide or have the manipulative(s) that I [think they need]. If I do really, really want them, I have to go spend the money and I can't always do that. I guess it is not having adequate money for resources. It would probably only take \$500.00 a year to provide those opportunities to my class.

[An outsider looking in would describe my classroom environment as] lots of fun a little chaotic, it may seem disorganized, but it is all organized to me. I know where everything is. The kids really like to do the centers, they believe they are playing and may not realize they are really learning. I think that is best because you [children who are early childhood age] learn through play anyway. I think sometimes if you pressure them, then they kind of get scared about what they are doing and they don't even want to try. They seem happy and engaged and they enjoy class.

[My teaching strengths are] that I am strict but lenient to the children so they know where they stand. They know what the rules are in the classroom. They know that I will give them opportunities to get [their behavior] together and come back to the group, to be a part of the group. I am creative and I also think of ideas and just go with it. Sometimes there are teachable moments, so I will take that time to teach that too. One day, a little girl in my class asked me about something when I was in the middle of doing something. I thought it was important enough so we went ahead and discussed it before we went on with our book we were reading. I am flexible and I will seize an opportunity to teach.

[My teaching weaknesses are] patience, I am not very patient. I like for them to do what I ask when I ask them too and when they are not cooperating it wears my patience. I don't seem to have much patience, so I should probably work on that. Also, which I have been trying to do this year, is [lower] the level of my voice. I need to lower the level of my voice. I am pretty loud when I talk to them. I think that is a little bit of stress too, so I try to be stress free. I try not to worry about things so much and go with the flow.

[In my current classroom there is evidence of care, concern, and connection] I think my kids this year have really gotten a full view of caring, concern and connection. We have a special needs child in our classroom. They all want to be her helper, help her get a drink, help her

with her locker, and you know, whatever she needs help with. Also, when somebody is hurt, they will help them and ask if they are okay. Even today I went up to school and one of the little boys said, "He was glad I was back. He was missing me." I have been out this week with sick children and I was just checking my classroom to make sure everything was ready for the next day. I said, "Well, I am not back." A little girl said, "Yes, you are." I said, "I am here but I'm not actually going to be in class." She said, "Oh, I hope (you will be) tomorrow."

## **Reese**

[The most fulfilling part of my teaching experience is] probably, the connection with the children when they come up and hug you, or when you are leaving at the end of the day and they come up and say, "Ms. Reed I love you." When they tell you that they, you know that just makes you feel you have done part of your job. Maybe not just the academic part but you have made a connection with them. They have a sense of belonging.

[The most discouraging part of my teaching experience] that is probably all the testing and accountability that we have to go through as educators to prove ourselves as worthy to the system. It is done to the kids it's a reflection on us the teachers. It may not be an accurate description of what is going on. The test may not even be testing what's age appropriate. So I am not really happy with that part of it. That is one

reason for my move to pre-k from third grade. When I first started teaching third grade it was very much enjoyable. I could use chapter books and bring in extra experiences for them like the [Japanese] tea party that we did with *Sudako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, making origami, getting the whole experience from the book, and enriching other areas of studies. It changed to we're giving you a pacing calendar. You follow the pacing calendar, which was given to us fourth quarter which didn't work because we had taught some of the stuff already. Then adopting a textbook series that I was told I had to use. Which was aggravating, I was teaching a little bit higher group of children at that point. The textbook would pull a chapter out of a book, like chapter three of *Ramona Quimby Age Eight*. We got to read chapter three. Why couldn't we read the whole book? I found that very frustrating. Then the benchmark tests every nine weeks or I am not even sure how often they were. Then the other tests on top of that, the standardized tests that you started prepping for in October. Then everything became very test oriented and not student centered and not real life learning centered. Instead it was very much how to bubble in and fill in your A, B, and Cs. I found that not very much to my liking. In pre-k I do administer a pre-screening skills test or a growth inventory and then a post. I feel much more freedom. I don't have a textbook for the reading portion. It might be nice to have some resources, but I can use what I feel is appropriate for the class. I can build my thematic units on whatever season it is or

whatever upcoming events the children have that might be related to their lives. Maybe Black History is more important than reading a snowman story from a reading series or something. So I think it is much more enjoyable and much more relevant to what is going on in their lives.

[An outsider looking in would describe my classroom environment thus] All of the children are like busy little bumble bees working in centers. Some of them are building tall structures, nearly two feet, with Lincoln Logs. Others are constructing houses with cardboard bricks. They are mindful of wearing their hard hats. Children are moving about freely to centers of their choice. There is a buzzing sound as the children work together.

[My teaching strengths are] discipline, teaching experience alone gives you many ideas. Your experience shapes how your discipline. You find what works and what doesn't. Hopefully you don't continue with things that don't work. You learn what the children respond to better. That is a big part of the culture where I am is discipline. They come to school without structure. They've got to learn the school atmosphere and expectations and how to conduct themselves almost in a different manner. Even speaking, we are correcting vocabulary all the time. What they would think is normal and what is normal in their community is not always what needs to happen when they are going out maybe looking for a job many years later. You don't tell someone I need to go use it [when speaking of using the restroom]. You try to show them that

there is different ways to say things that might be more appropriate for a more formal setting, even though school is not totally formal. Some of them it is just so much a part of what they have already learned for the first four years of their life and that is what they go home to everyday. I still correct the same ones everyday.

[My teaching weaknesses are] I'm not saying I don't have any weaknesses; I just need to think of my worst ones. No – [laughing]. I'm not sure, I enjoy science and math at that level is pretty straightforward so I can pretty much dig my way through that. If you don't have the resources that you need to use as far as getting thematic units together, that could be a big problem. Patience, most of the time I have that but sometimes I don't. I could work on that. I have days where it is just not there as much as it needs to be. There are days when you are just not feeling well. If you tell them, boys and girls I am not feeling well today, they can be somewhat understanding.

[In my current classroom there is evidence of care, concern, and connection] We try to teach all the children that we are a family. We're here all day together. We're much like a family so we need to show each other respect and treat each other with kindness. At the four year old level I have some very rowdy children who think it is more fun to hit someone else than it is to, you know help them up when they fall down. You have to teach them those things. When someone falls over in their chair instead of laughing at them, I basically have to model for them, we

don't laugh we go over and help them up and ask if they are okay. That is just an on-going process. That is how they play with their siblings at home and it might be even how they get attention from mom. Concern would be like helping someone up. On the other hand, if a child is sick, "I wonder where is so and so? Ms. Reed is going to call and find out." Or, making cards for a child that has been out for a long time is making those connections with the others and reaching out. I had a grandparent that used to come in a whole lot and helped with any little thing. She is not there anymore because the little boy moved. That was a nice addition because the children that saw her knew that she was the grandmother and treated her that way and really enjoyed her coming in so that was kind of neat. It is not very often that you have someone who has the time to devote to the class like that. She would step up like a grandmother and correct them when they needed to be corrected but not over step her boundaries. That was really nice. I miss her. She was always there for parties. Sometimes she would come in and just stay for breakfast. Sometimes she would come for lunch or she might come in for the playground. Sometimes you didn't know when she was coming in. It wasn't a stated thing. She knew that parents are welcome to stay. Get a visitors pass and enjoy. I have an open door policy that you are welcome anytime. This particular grandmother was a very much active part in our day. She wasn't just sitting back scrutinizing what was going

on. She was actively involved with the children. She would play with them or read to them at centers.

#### The teacher participant's voice – stories of the future

At the end of the personal history interviews, I asked each participant if there was anything else that they wanted to share with me. Every single one of them shared their stories about what they took away from participating in this book study research project. Their comments were welcome because it had been my intention all along that the participants should not feel that their involvement was solely for the purpose of completing my Dissertation for a Doctorate of Psychology. With gratification I heard that most felt they had learned a lot from reading the book *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. Some found the book difficult to follow and understand, but they indicated that the group meetings were an invaluable tool for helping them to create meaning. It was through the group discussions that elements of Martin's theory would become apparent and more meaningful to their own experiences. How did this group of educators experience this reading of *The Schoolhome*? I will elucidate my findings from this research in much detail in the next chapter. In their own words, this is what they said:

I have enjoyed it. Anytime you stretch yourself and learn something new and different that was a good thing. The book [*The Schoolhome*], I will use some of that stuff. There is always something to be learned. (Ann)



I really did enjoy the book. I'm not sure I would have enjoyed the book as much without the group sessions, because we would come and talk and bring our own experiences into it. It just made it more meaningful. I was not familiar with some of the philosophers. Of course, Freud, Emerson, and all of those I thought I knew, it was just a different spin, a different angle of their philosophy. I never would have been exposed to that without this group. So, I did, I enjoyed it. I am not sure I would have just picked this book on my own and read it. It was a good experience. (Joan)

The book for me was hard to read. In the beginning, I remember not being able to get through many pages before dosing off. It got better later on after having some of the discussions. I started looking into more to find out what they saw in the chapters. It got easier to read and more interesting. I don't think I could have read the book on my own for pleasure. It made me see the good things that I do in my classroom. It made me feel good about the things I am doing to help my kids. Basically, I am on the right track and that is encouraging. (Renee)

I think I got more out of the study group. It was hard for me to read and to understand some of Martin's book. When we discussed it, it made more sense. Sometimes when I read and I am not really into it, it is hard for me to remember what I have read. I think the others talking helped me to understand it more. When I was reading the book, I felt like some of the stuff we already do. Sometimes you have your children

explore like Montessori [her theories on learning] and sometimes it is teacher led. All of those strategies were in the book [*The Schoolhome*]. I think that we strive to provide a caring school environment that is close to home as possible if not better. I always felt that kids need to know that you care too. The way to show them is by being caring and loving and showing them respect also. I think a lot of them do not get that [caring] at home so when they get it [care] from the other ones in class they show more respect towards them. The items at school they take care of them. (Marie)

I think the three Cs are great. I think they should be adopted by more than just a few teachers. We have tons and tons of programs out there are on life skills. Those three Cs would cover almost every life skill you would have. If we adopted those three Cs we would have this big umbrella from which whole schools could work under. I think that's a great point of the book. I see how it can start in small pockets but if you adopted that whole school, it would be an understanding that would go from teacher to teacher because the children aren't going to stay with the same teacher throughout elementary school. They are going to be going on next year to a new teacher. It would be nice if it could be adopted by the whole school. If not, teacher by teacher is better than not at all.

(Reese)

The book study group meetings consisted of six two hour sessions which were audio taped for later transcription. Prior to beginning the research for this

dissertation, I scheduled a preliminary meeting so that the participants could get acquainted. This initial meeting also served the following purposes: to explain the whole process in which they were making a commitment, to gather signatures for informed consent, to pass out the books, *The Schoolhome*, and folders for journaling, to establish a calendar of convenient dates for future meetings, and to read and discuss the Epilogue together.

At the conclusion of this first meeting, I handed the participant's a paper with a few questions and quotes pertinent to the reading of Chapter One. At the end of each session a questions and quotes sheet was provided for the next chapter reading – see appendices D. The questions and quotes were meant to serve as a conversation beginning point for our discussions of each chapter.

During the first meeting, I facilitated the group decision to meet on a bi-weekly basis for the next several months. This was a huge commitment on their part, because in between those meetings they were also going to be reading a chapter and journaling their thoughts concerning these readings. These teachers were ultra dependable and showed up regularly and on time with notebooks in hand. Our discussions were sometimes serious, sometimes reminiscent, and often times funny.

Many times something they read sparked a memory about something that had happened to them, a colleague, or a student in their classroom either now or in the past. The teachers were all eager to share their stories. The conversations appeared to wander off on a number of tangents. However, the discussions nearly always revolved around education or what is best for the

children trustfully left to our care daily. As I was transcribing, I decided not to leave out any seemingly tangential narratives because most of them tied directly with the themes that I had begun to see unfolding and many provided insight to my research question.

This research quest began because I wondered if another group of teachers would have a meaningful experience by reading and discussing *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. After the participants reading of Martin's book the narratives have been obtained orally, transcribed, examined, and coded for connections and themes relevant to this research. What stories were told that helped clarify the existence and meaning of my theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity? Four themes were revealed and discussed from available research in the review of literature from chapter two of this dissertation. In order to flesh out the themes that were central to the literature review, the participants' stories were carefully and critically examined and coded. Chapter five describes those relevant findings and chapter six includes any further findings and conclusions. The purpose of these last two chapters will be to answer the following research questions: As teachers how do they experience this set of readings? Through reading and discussion what happens to them or what doesn't happen to them?

Teachers' voices need to be heard as they may be the last hope of advocacy for our children. This very direct and honestly imparted narrative gleaned during our bi-weekly discussion meetings became an integral part of

my findings or conclusions which will be illuminated in chapter five and conclusions drawn in chapter six.

## CHAPTER FIVE – UNRAVELING THE KNOT

*Friends are there when your hopes are raveled and your nerves  
are knotted; talking about nothing in particular, you can feel the tangles  
untwist.*

Pam Brown

### The Teachers Have Spoken – The Analysis of the Participants' Voices

Stephanie

*That sunny August morning in 1997, I remember waking up a little earlier than usual. I wanted to look my best for my first day of school. Breakfast consisted of a sliced banana with a spoonful of yogurt, almonds and cinnamon sprinkled on top. That combination of creamy smooth, nutty covered fruit was comforting as it settled in my mouth and slid down my throat. I was in such a state of nervous anticipation that sitting still in my dining room chair facing the window looking out over the front garden was difficult. Gazing listlessly at the daisies growing there my mind was filled with grief. Our family had just buried my infant grandson, Cole. I allowed myself a little time to remember Cole and his sweet little baby smile. Conversely, staying busy was a way to assuage the feelings of deep sorrow that filled my soul. I flew down the hall to the bedroom to begin getting dressed. Only the fanciest dress would do on a day like today. I was going to begin teaching first grade! The dress, cerulean blue chiffon, went on over my head and fell softly upon my shoulders and settled around my waist like a cascading waterfall. As I turned to catch a glimpse of my reflection in the mirror, I fastened up the buttons and carefully smoothed the row of ruffles*

*around the neckline. The image in the mirror smiled back at me as if to say everything will be fine. The summer had not been a shining success. I was finishing the coursework for a Master of Education degree as my precious firstborn grandson was born three months pre-mature. The days were spent rushing between classes and the hospital. Cole was such a frail little duck who had hatched way too soon.*

*In first grade, I would teach children to read. I love to read! That is something to get comfortable with. All of these thoughts were running through my mind as I slipped the blue leather sandals on each foot and carefully began to buckle them. I ran a comb through my long brown hair and finally, I was ready for this momentous day. This felt like a day for new beginnings which had been nervously anticipated for several weeks. Stepping out of the back door, pushing the garage door button, and getting into the car were all done automatically. My husband had left a small note on the windshield which read – Mrs. Holcomb – First Day of School, August 7, 1997. Entering the school building, my shoes made a soft shush-shushing sound as I walked the long halls to the classroom. All the while streaming through my mind were these questions: “Would my students like me? Would they be good friends? Would anyone notice my cerulean blue dress? Would anyone notice me the fully grown duck with rows of downy pin feathers surrounding my neck?” Just what was in store, I wasn’t certain but feelings of confidence along with trepidation for whatever this year had to offer welled up inside. At last, I had arrived, the last door at the very end of the last hallway. Walking around the room, opening the*

*window shades, turning on the lights, and making sure everything was in its proper place, these things were all done automatically without any need for thought. As the students arrived, I was standing by the door. The first one was a tiny, little bit of a girl. She walked up and put her arms around my waist for a hug and looked up at my face. I said, "Hello," and smiled down at her. She gazed into my eyes with her sparkly brown eyes and at that moment it was clear that everything was going to be fine. This new pond felt safe and secure similar to home.*

*Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some people stay for awhile and leave their footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.*

Flavia

The teachers' voices ring clear

My research has led me down a path of discovery and revelation. I have discovered that within me lies capabilities that seemed absent or suppressed. I have learned that I have a voice and what I have to say is very important. I have learned to listen carefully to the voices of others to discern the meaning within the stories they share. I have discovered that in order to make changes in our world it is sometimes necessary to go out on a limb, to say things people may not agree with, to take a stand, to clear my voice and speak my stories so that others will want to listen. The revelations have been many. One that became apparent may not be news to anyone else but it certainly was eye opening to me. Searching for words to put in the titles of my chapter sub-



headings was sometimes laborious. Not wanting to keep using the words “personal history interviews” or “narratives,” I reflected on the word story which more accurately reflected what my research participants had done. When dialoguing about *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families* by Martin and answering questions for the biographies, and personal history interviews, they told stories of their lives. Little vignettes that offered a window into their lives.

My thinking led me to a critical analysis of the word history, which I began to read as his-story. Could it be true that this word I had used so often and without thought had roots in the idea that only men had stories worth telling? It was at that critical moment that I decided for my subtitle headings on the use of the word her-story as a play on the word history which is so commonly used.

Knowing the importance of insuring the data collection resulting from the book study research would not be swayed by my own thoughts and feelings related to reading *The Schoolhome*, influenced the way I conducted myself to a great degree. It was also impressed upon me that in order to insure valid and reliable data, I should not be a participant in the actual discussion of the chapters but rather take on the facilitator role. My function was to ask non-leading questions and to probe respondents for further details, proceeding with caution so as not to lead them to any conclusions about that which they read. It was important for me to allow the discussions that ensued and let the stories unfold naturally.

The questions used were open-ended such as: What were the underlying or overall themes, points or ideas in this chapter from your perspective? Additionally, before beginning each of the sessions, I emphasized how valuable it was to have an honest opinion. Often I said, "Please don't hesitate to say what is on your mind." At the conclusion of each meeting, I provided the teacher participants with a list of questions and quotes pertaining to the next chapter – see appendices D

. These questions or quotes were merely for the purpose of providing starting points for conversations if needed. The participants' discussions were certainly not limited by these questions and quotes. Based on my analysis of the participants' dialogue, which indicated the prevalence in our present educative system of oppressive silencing of the teachers' voices, I told their personal stories in as much of their own words as possible. Again, I used parenthesis to indicate changing a name or identity to insure the protection of privacy.

After reviewing the current literature to determine what research has been conducted or evidence revealed pertaining to education and the purpose which will serve all members of our current society, four themes became relevant. The first theme explored ideas regarding the purpose of education in the United States and educators shifting views on that concept. Dewey introduced his theory of progressive education which included an experimental, child-centered process. His idea was that education should not be based on an historical approach – learning the lessons of our fathers in order to become an

educated member of society, but rather on each child's experiences in relation to their interests to create a desire for attaining new knowledge. Dewey's pedagogic creed is a direct refutation of all that No Child Left Behind represents.

I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. All reforms which rest simply upon the law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon change of mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile....But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move....Education thus conceived marks the most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience. (Dewey, 1897)

These words spoken by Dewey seem rather prophetic as if he knew that nearly 100 years later politicians would come up with a law that threatens certain penalties to school districts, individual schools and thereby the teachers in those schools. The teacher participants in this study realize all too well the impact NCLB has had on their classrooms and schools. Everything from what they teach, how the lesson plans are to be written, what words are to be posted on the classroom walls, to not being allowed to provide recess time for their students stems from these mandates sent down from the national government. Ann stated, "There is a faction or new theory or something out there that children don't even need recess, but oh yes they do! I don't know where I

heard that, it could be connected with NCLB.” Reese asked, “How do we create the homelike community when we have to teach to all those standards?” She continued, “We don’t have time to do all that. We could integrate some in but we still have to have good test takers.” Renee found it ludicrous that we are required to have all these [life skills] words posted on our classroom walls. “What does that mean [to my kindergarteners]? It means nothing. It’s just a lot of busy stuff on my walls.” She thought they should be integrated into the curriculum and students allowed time to implement them in their daily routine. “If you don’t use those words, it does no good. The words are there for you to use not to plaster all over your walls for somebody [district administration] who is going to walk through the building.” Reese discussed the State of the Union Address when President Bush spoke about No Child Left Behind. She said, “He said he wants to give everyone, all children who are attending a bad school a ticket to go to a good school. Until we get politicians or administrators to realize it’s the population that makes up the school.” Reese doesn’t think they want to admit it as it would make too many people angry to admit the truth. She added, “A school is probably not doing well because the population has not had the experiences or they are living in poverty.” She didn’t understand why they don’t get that? “It is not going to change that child’s problem by going to a good school because it will only change that [school’s] population.” The district gives bonuses to teachers that work in schools which exceed the AYP standards. It is no big mystery or surprise which schools will receive these bonuses before the school year even begins. Among many others, Ann is upset about the

teachers from those schools getting bonuses because of their AYP. Reese shared this thought, "Why don't they give them [teacher's receiving the bonuses] a ticket to an at-risk school and let them work there for about two or three years. Isabella agreed, "Just flip them all if they are so wonderful and flip those principals too."

Montessori's (1983) theories on education tended to focus on the child's individual growth which led to the development of a system of education based on free discipline and free choice by children. She established three essential characteristics of her educational method. The first is characterized by the importance attributed to environment. The second focused on the role of the educator as observer or assisting in the psychological development of the child. Respect for the child's personality is essential to the final characteristic. Marie shared, "I think my kids really enjoy coming to school. They ask, 'What are we doing today?'" Reese concurred, "It's a structured environment. They feel worthwhile, safe, and nurtured. I think they do want discipline. They want the structure and to know they have boundaries." Ann thought that when Martin used Montessori's methods as an example of how classrooms could become more like a home that when the kindergarteners play dress up and they pretend cook that was not what Martin envisioned. "She [Martin] wanted it to be a totally different learning environment. It is the whole classroom becomes the home." Other participants picked up on Ann's idea and discussed it at length with each other. Marie said, "We need a living room. Let's go read in the living room." Ann suggested a game room to play games in. Marie shared that some of what

Martin is suggesting albeit on a much smaller scale does occur daily in her classroom. "When they are in the home center they are learning how to interact with others. The children are learning, oh I'll do this role and you take care of the babies while I cook." She went on to say, "I think to a certain extent we are doing Montessori's home." Reese expressed a desire to see how a Montessori classroom used to look, "It sounds like a real quiet environment." Ann wondered how the individual tasks were supposed to work. She pondered, "Whether there was a descriptive role for each one of the roles they were playing or the activities they were doing, or whether it was prescriptive for each child?" Reese responded that she understood them to be individualized activities. "From her [Martin's] book I gathered that she [Montessori] built these apparatuses that would keep them so intent on what they were doing that they would sit and work on them for long periods of time."

Martin included information from Rita Kramer's biography of Montessori. Kramer wrote that William Heard Kilpatrick, an assistant professor of philosophy of education at Teachers College, Columbia University, launched a devastating attack on Montessori's educative ideas (p. 124). I asked the participants what they thought motivated his censorship of Montessori? Joan read aloud to the group this entry in her journal, "I wrote that he put her down for not being widely read in the field of education of her time.

From her journal entry, Renee read "He also said she [Montessori] didn't think it through logically. Reese noted the following in her journal and also shared her written thoughts with the group.

I think he probably felt it as a threat too. What had been long established in this country as education, reading, writing, rote memorization, it is a threatening... I think that is how he dealt with that. "Who is this Italian woman to tell us? Madame, this will disrupt our whole ideas and philosophy of education."

Ann glibly added, "Or he is probably thinking that is just a silly woman thing. She is going to change the world by having kids carry soup tureens."

Frequently the participants would bring in information from an article they read or a program on television that tied into what we were reading and discussing during the course of the book study. Reese shared a newspaper article she had read about a child's brain development. The article she referred to was about an early education expert, Dr. Jack Shonkoff of Harvard University. Based on his scientific research he proposed that brain development needs nurturing relationships. Reese read, "Creating stable and caring relationships in a child's earliest years will lead to proper brain development." She told the group that the article also said, "If you focus on just academic development and pre-reading and do not pay attention to a child's social emotional development, then you are not preparing that child to learn in school and especially children who have had stress." Dr. Shonkoff's study indicated that children who have experienced stress will be more difficult and expensive, as the child ages, to get them help and rewire the brain. Reese continued, "There is actually research that is done that shows there is

something that shuts down in the brain. There's a hormone release that deals with stress and impeded development and weakens the brain's circuits."

Martin developed her theory for providing a Schoolhome where care, concern, and connection prevail based on her understandings of Dewey and Montessori and their educational models or methods. Noddings (1992) envisioned the main aim of education as being the production of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. She expressed concern that far too many of our students are being marginalized in the current educational system; the push seems to be to prepare everyone for college. Instead, Noddings proposed that schools should be instilling in students a respect for all forms of honest work done well. In her view an essential for all students is preparation for the world of work, parenting, and civil responsibilities. Reese told the group about attending one of the new superintendent's coffees which is supposed to be a time of interaction between him and the teachers in the district. She told the other participants about the superintendent's response to a question asked.

There were questions about extra-curricular activities; can't those be built into the curriculum? His response was no, they can't unless you want to add hours onto the day and his big focus is we are preparing them all for college. We're here just for the academics and that is his big focus basically. We are not here for the whole child.

Ann mentioned something she had read in Martin's book about the power of curricular silence being enormous. She read, "Whether or not what is taught in school and college is in fact worthwhile, in calling something education



we place our seal of approval on it" (p.74). Marie surmised, "I think it is what you take out of what you learn. It has to be what you take from it." Ann agreed and said, "And how you can apply it." Marie said, "If you just know you want to be a mother, you might take a high school home economics course where you worked with a pretend baby." Reese said, "Maybe they should all be enrolled in that class to teach them a little care and compassion." Marie continued, "Education becomes important if it is something you are interested in. If you are planning on going to college you would take a different kind of coursework." Ann responded, "That is not where our curriculum is headed right now because everybody is going to go to college." She has had to rethink some of the things she has been told even while attending training like Great Expectations that are supposed to teach character building strategies to be utilized in a classroom. "I was putting up a bulletin board that said "College Bound First Graders." Then I got to thinking they are not all going to college. So I changed it to "Success Bound First Graders" in whatever they decide to do." Marie granted, "Right, because they need to feel comfortable and confident. I might not go to college but that is still okay. All of the pressure we are putting on them could make it worse." Ann said, "Like nine years of math and science." Reese shared that this is also a societal issue because not much value is placed on those workers that are in public service. Marie said, "It is the actresses and the football players." Ironically neither of those professions requires a college degree. Ann said, "Our priorities are so screwed up. That is what they [politicians] are saying [every single student must be college bound] by sticking in all these

extra math courses and this humdrum stuff that most people aren't going to use." This thought was included in one of Marie's discussions.

When you go out in the world, any field you go out in, unless you have your own business, you are not going to be working on your own. You are going to be working with other people. You have to communicate and get along with others. When you bring in your favorite 'little' unit, you have something where they [the children] are doing hands on with the group, besides being at their desk doing SRA [scripted reading program].

The second theme that became apparent as a result of the literature review dealt with the societal alterations that are perceived to be the impetus in revolutionizing the way education is enacted. Martin (1992) referred to Dewey's assertion that the American home had been transformed permanently by the Industrial Revolution which removed work from the household. Dewey's educative theories were based on the idea of work being removed from home to factories. Conversely, Montessori's theories on education were shaped by the realization that one or both parents were removed from the home as a direct result of the Industrial Revolution. Martin and Noddings both mention these societal changes as a foundation piece for their educational theories. Noddings (1992) noted the sluggish response of schools to technological changes but found schools have commonly ignored huge societal changes. Noddings suggested the most important change – that of family arrangements – can readily be found in today's typical classroom. Many children are from homes in

which both parents work for a living and many others live with single parents. She mentioned the prevalence of television in most homes in the United States as another important change in the way students of today view the world. Sadly, Noddings explained that children from lower socio-economic households have an even higher television viewing time than average which has resulted in drastically curtailed playtime. Reese and many other participants were concerned about this loss of playtime and the impact it has on children. She said, "Even in first grade they don't have much recess, to me that is the only non-structured time where they could learn how to interact with each other." Ann held, "They don't know how to play with each other." Reese replied, "They don't get that at home either." Later on in the discussion Ann said, "Our kids are starting even younger with having no innocence." Reese reiterated, "Child's work is their play. That is why recess is so important too. I don't think a lot of them are allowed to play outside." Ann added, "No, if they are latch key children, then they have to go home and go inside and stay inside." Renee and others responded that some children are not allowed to play outside anymore because of unsafe conditions in their neighborhoods. One of her kindergarten students had been dragged around and slapped by the next door neighbor and told that he was watching every move they make. "The kids don't want to go outside anymore. They are so scared they don't want to leave their house." Often stories the participants shared about their own students told of the many changes in family structure that children live with today. Reese made mention of Martin's inclusion of Plato's idea to keep bad things that happen away from

the children and they won't mimic them (p. 80). She didn't see how that would be possible now because the children live it [bad things] every day, they see it. "Even our own children who are not prone to violence in the home, they see it on T.V. Technology has brought a lot of that about into plain view. You would not believe how they play on the playground." Marie told of pre-k students in her classroom playing guns and arresting. "They [pre-k students] come in and tell me how their mom's boyfriend attacked her last night and they couldn't sleep." Reese also shared that this year she only has two children in her class that have two parents in the home. She said, "It's single parents or their grandparents raising them." Those students that come from foster care homes did not fare much better. Reese told a story about a young man that she had when she taught third grade that suffered from separation anxiety from school. As she described it:

He went bonkers all year but the last three weeks of school he went double bonkers. On the last day of school when we had our little closing circle, he pulled his whole shirt up over his head and boo-hooed in my class. If you think about it he is probably kind of angry at the school because we are not going to be there for him anymore throughout the summer. He had some anger there; he was in foster care that was not a good situation.

Ann commented that some of our kids are going on 30. During the discussion of chapter three, Ann told another story that indicated another change she saw in our society.

Well, we had a little gal come back and her mom was with her, she was so proud, I remember it real candidly because...she was in seventh grade and had a baby. Her mother was so proud. She was like; yeah this is our little Abraham Lincoln baby because he was born on his birthday. I could hardly say anything positive to her like oh he's precious or good luck. It was just killing me I thought where's your school. How come you're not in school?

Marie realized that not all problems with the children are in direct relation to parenting situations. She said, "That is probably why most of our kids at school are hungry because their parents are working [Wal-mart, Braum's] and they make too much to be on food stamps."

Another time, discussion of chapter five and the idea put forth by Martin that what transpires in the halls and lunchroom may fall outside the standard subject, but its educational value is not thereby diminished (p.167). Marie agreed with that idea.

Okay that's why they need to have longer lunch times too and not make them shovel their food down their throat. That is when they learn conversation because they are probably not getting it at home. That's how they learn to be cooperative at your table and certain things. I think you [the teacher] have to model it at first but then I think [they could do it].

Renee agreed as well, because she ate with her students on Valentine's Day and noticed that she spent the whole time trying to get all her students to eat.

“No one else makes them eat. I am like, take three bites, and drink some milk. I would like to sit in there and eat with them, especially when I see how they don’t eat.”

Reese expressed distress about some of the home daycares. She said, “I think some of them are not better than the home they are coming from. They [daycare providers] are using fear and these other kind of tactics,” Not only the amount of television viewing time but lack of supervision while viewing television was perceived to be another big problem area by some participants. Ann related, “I have a little girl, one of my first graders, who was telling me the other day that she watches ‘On the Beach’. I just said, ‘I don’t think you ought to be watching that’. I was just appalled.”

After their regular school day is over, several of the participants tutor older students for a couple of hours each day. They understand that the children are not just coming for the extra help in certain subject areas. Ann is tutoring 14 fourth graders with multiplication. She offered to help, if her administrator needed her, not realizing she would end up with that many. She said, “Those kids are coming, 14 of them after school. I don’t think all of them are coming because their parents have made them do it. I think some are coming because they need a place to be in the afternoon.” According to Ann, “That is a perfect thing.” Marie agreed with Ann, “If they don’t go, then maybe they are going home to an empty house and they would rather be at school.” Ann said, “They are going to get a snack, they are going to have some food after school.” Renee also tutors for two hours after school. She does third

grade math and reading. “I would go home exhausted everyday because I have 17 that come and they all come every day.” Marie added, “I think the reason those kids want to do that is because they are not having to go home to an empty house. Also, they know they are safe while in school, so they would rather be there than home.”

The teacher’s role in caring to promote Compassionate Connectivity was the third theme developed from the review of the literature. Buscaglia, Silberman, Rogers, and others have persisted in the notion that relationships do matter to sustain a productive life and that a society devoid of basic human need is doomed. Silberman concluded that we’re doing a very good job when it comes to reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling considering that in the United States education is for all. But in teaching individuals how to be human beings we fail miserably. Rogers (1969) put forth the notion that a climate for learning so different from the ordinary classroom can be achieved by a teacher who cares, who prizes, who trusts the learner. In Martin’s (1992) view the role of the teacher is to model the ideals we want our students to emulate. She envisioned a new curriculum that will encourage our students to be participants in life and not merely observers of life. Fleener (2002) provided insight with her theory of recreating heart which occurs when educators realize they are teaching children with their own unique set of understanding where a set curriculum that barely scratches the surface is not only insufficient – it is inappropriate. She encouraged educators to open up the discussion by which change can occur. Many stories were shared by the participants about how necessary it is to also

include teaching individuals how to be human beings. Reese expressed her concern that her little pre-k students can be quite mean with each other. She declared:

You have to teach them that if somebody trips over something instead of laughing, you need to ask are you okay. I have asked if they are okay and now I see some of my students showing that kind of concern for another. But their natural response, well I don't know if it is natural but what they know is to laugh if someone gets hurt.

Marie, Ann, and Reese had a discussion about how important it was to them, even as college students, to have instructors who cared, who prized, and trusted them as learners. Marie told the group that she would get a lot more out of a class if the teacher was motivated and really enjoyed what they were doing. "There were some classes that I knew I wasn't going to do well in when I first stepped in the classroom and there were others I thought oh this is going to be good." She told about having to take English Composition I for a second time but what a difference it made when she found a class that wasn't so big and teacher that was willing to work with her and help her. Reese thought having smaller classes made a big difference in her college experiences as well.

Yes, I found that coming from a big college setting where I had 200 people in a Biology class where you were assigned a number and then switching school to a private university where I had 20 and getting to know your instructor made a huge difference. I did enjoy getting to know my instructors and being able to talk with them and they knew my name



and my capabilities, my strengths and weaknesses. A Biology class with 200 people forget it!

The participants had a lengthy discussion about Martin's view that a teacher's role should be to model the ideals that we want our students to imitate. They discussed their feelings on the idea that the new curriculum envisioned by Martin should encourage our students to be participants in life not just observers (p. 90). Several teachers provided stories of how they are doing just that. Joan told of a number of things they do at her school including: Pennies for Patients – to help people who have leukemia, a mitten tree, canned food drive, and collecting stuffed animals for children who end up in shelters. Joan said, "I think we try to teach them caring for others." Ann assured:

That gives them empowerment. Our kids brought canned foods for Thanksgiving or Christmas; some of that stuff was commodities. Those cans had pink labels on them and they looked like they were older than the hills. But, they were so proud of that. That is a really good thing that they can give.

Martin's critique of American education embracing only one form of human activity and behavior—spectatorship includes this suggestion for amelioration, "Supplying students with different kinds of lenses for different occasions—now those of a physicist, now those of a historian, a psychologist, a philosopher..." (1992, p. 93). I asked the participants if they had strategies that they used for supplying students with "different kinds of lenses for different

occasions". Marie shared a story about a Cinco de Mayo celebration in her classroom from the year before.

Last year, I had several Hispanic kids in my class and we did Cinco de Mayo for all the kids. We made piñatas and learned the Mexican Hat Dance. Then we had a party and celebrated it with the kids. They really enjoyed it and you could just see, even the Hispanic kids that probably think – oh they don't know anything about this – they were having a lot of fun you could see it in their faces.

Reese also shared an activity that taught her kids about another culture. "When I taught third grade, I presented a lesson on *Sudako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*." Isabella told of her plans to bring a Chinese New Year celebration to the students in her school along with the help of her Chinese exchange teacher. She also mentioned a children's book to the group which she highly recommended.

There is this really good book; I just got it for this Asian class. It is called, *My Name is Yoon*. It is about a little Korean girl. She came to America with her family. When she goes to school, she has to take an American name. At first, she doesn't like it, she doesn't like the sound of it, and when she writes it, it is not pretty like the Korean characters. The teacher is teaching them different words. She teaches them cat. Well cat is a really nice name; I think I will become cat. It is just so cute. Then she wants to be named fish and bird. Then finally, the acceptance

with the children and the teacher and she is Yoon. It is just a really neat book. I wrote this big lesson that I did with my kids.

Renee shared another lesson on learning about different cultures of the world.

"I took a two month trip to Mexico and I brought back a lot of artifacts. We did a big unit on the Hispanic culture. I have eight or nine Hispanic kids in my class."

Ann told yet another story about providing her students with a different kind of lens to learn about social injustice even at the tender age of six.

We decorated our door for Black History month. We did Ruby Bridges and I have one little girl who wrote about it. She said, 'I have friends who are black and white' and then went on to talk about it. It was so neat. I didn't want to give it back to her. I wanted to keep it. That is the most wonderful little book [*Ruby Bridges*]. So we put on these little skirts in front of everybody. She was a first grader you know. That's what we brought out.

The final theme pertained to the models for caring which will be necessary in classrooms with diverse student populations. The literature review for this theme included Kozol's (1991), thoughts on education particularly as it pertains to children of poverty. In his travels about the country to obtain information about the extremes of wealth and poverty in our nations schools, he became troubled by what he discovered. He stated, "None of the national reports I saw made even passing references to inequality or segregation" (p. 3). His descriptions of the neighborhoods and realities of these students from impoverished districts rang true to children, even today, in classrooms in any

large urban area. Martin (2002) proposed the idea that equality of education does not mean the same curriculum is required for all; different curricula can in fact prepare people for the same role in life. These teacher's stories support Martin's statement that boredom, inattention, and a lack of motivation create the need for external prods and sanctions, when the opportunities for choice are diminished in education (p. 125). Noddings (1992) encouraged opening the dialogue in order to subsist from denying that problems between people of different race, ethnicity, religion, and gender do exist (p.120). I did not limit my study participant selection by asking only teachers from lower socio-economic schools to take part. It was purely coincidental that all six teachers work in Title I schools where the free and reduced lunch percentages far exceeded the 65% established by our nation's lawmakers. Consequently, many ideas were shared and stories were told by the participants about working with diverse student populations and especially children of poverty. The discussion during the first session turned to homeless families, in response to Martin's assertion that about 2 million and perhaps even 3 - 4 million people in the United States most of whom are families and most have three children are homeless (p. 25). Ann expressed it this way, "That is obscene. They are just living on the streets or in some kind of make-shift shelter and we want them to come to school..." Joan finished for her, "...and be ready to learn. Let's teach them to read. Their basic needs are not being met." Ann provided the following view:

At some point in your relationship you figure out where they are coming from, if you are perceptive or observant. We eat lunch with our students

and some kids stand up the whole time. We are saying, 'Let's use your good manners. Sit down.' They are not used to doing that.

Perhaps even more revealing are the following four stories. Two were shared by Ann as the rest of the participants gasped. "I had a child one time for show and tell [who brought] a rat in a jar. Yes, my reaction was exactly that, it was repulsion, it was being incredulous, and that was his pet for the moment."

I had a parent come one day with roaches on her and they were hopping off of her. She had on a shirt and shorts and the kids were staring as the roaches crawled off of her. I don't know what kind of environment you must live in to have that happen. I was riveted to the spot, oh man.

The third story is one Marie shared:

Last year, I had a student tell me and the whole class when they sit down to eat they have to fight bugs off their plates. Some of the kids said, "Oh, it was probably just an ant or something like that." He responded, "No, it's roaches." I am trying not to picture it in my head that you are trying to eat and have to fight bugs off your plate. That was his reality.

In order to facilitate this line of thought, I shared:

One morning, the part-time assistant came in and said she had to take her husband to the hospital the night before. While they were waiting she saw a man come in that looked like Orville [a little boy in the class]. So I said, "I wonder if that was Orville's dad because I have met his dad." All the children sit on the round reading rug while taking attendance and doing our morning greeting and I asked, "Orville did your dad go to the

hospital last night?" In his low drawly voice he replied, "No, he went to jail. He has been hittin' on my momma." Just as if it were an everyday announcement to the class.

Many of the participants have students who are Hispanic or Native American and come from lower socio-economic households. In response to the discussion about Rodriguez from Martin's book, Joan brought up a story about a little girl who was told she could only speak English and not Spanish. The child felt segregated from her family because she didn't understand what they were saying. Ann mentioned that what happened to Rodriguez and this little girl, Joan spoke of, probably happens to a lot of people when they become successful and live in a totally different plane of existence. She found this situation sad.

In [our country's] history we have seen that we have taken the Indian children out of their culture and made them forget their language and they lost that. I don't know how to speak German yet that's my ancestry and I wish I could. Here when children are at the age where they can grasp anything and we are telling them no, you can't speak Spanish anymore you can only speak English. We just have to come up with a way where all of that is included.

Reese summed it up like this, "But some how no one wants to correlate poverty with lower test scores." Ann facetiously added, "Oh, that is just a copout, you know that is a copout." Then she asked two pointed questions, "Why aren't all schools magnet schools? How are we going to fix it?"

Two new themes which became apparent to me as I was transcribing and through the process of reading and re-reading the transcriptions are thus: Teachers are experiencing oppressive conditions as they perform their multitudinous educative tasks. Their voices have been effectively hushed by a “culture of silence” perpetuated by a number of different factions. Teachers show a dogged determination to make a difference in the lives of children in spite of these oppressive circumstances.

In all the stages of decoding, people exteriorize their view of the world. And in the way they think about and face the world – fatalistically, dynamically, or statically – their generative themes may be found. A group which does not concretely express generative thematics – a fact which might appear to imply the nonexistence of themes – is, in the contrary, suggesting a very dramatic theme: *the theme of silence*.  
(Freire, 1997 p. 87)

This concept of oppression and “culture of silence” are taken from Paolo Freire’s work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire was concerned with the problem of human liberation as it applied to the impoverished people of Brazil. Freire developed a theory based on his certainty that every person is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with other people. Given the proper tools and enough time, individuals can perceive their personal and social reality and be empowered to deal critically with it and thereby open the way to a new future. In the forward to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire, Richard Shaul wrote,

...man's ontological vocation (as he [Freire] calls it) is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. This world to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a *given* reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked on and solved. (p. 14)

Shaul also asserted that this theory is now supported by a wide background of experience and furthermore, "Freire (is convinced) that every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others" (p.14).

Freire (1997), explained that it is not just discovering the oppressor that must occur for praxis to transpire. The discovery must include action along with serious reflection.

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis. (Freire, p. 47)

Teachers are working under some very tough conditions due to a serious lack of support and respect. Their voices silenced by an over-riding oppression. What or whom are these oppressors? I will elaborate on this theme further in chapter six of this dissertation. In brief, the participant's stories revealed that



the parents are one group of oppressors who use bullying or threats as a form of oppression – “I am going to call the Education Service Center.” These parent oppressors know their voices will be heard and validated because they are appealing to another group of oppressors, the administrators. In turn, the administrators spread their boondoggle to yet another group of oppressors, the politicians, who oppress by making laws, which are not practical and not properly funded, namely No Child Left Behind.

The participants told numerous stories of the oppression that overpowers even the most experienced educators and causes them to feel marginalized dehumanized, and powerless. What precipitated the stories that were told over and over by every single participant about the oppression that overshadows everything they do in the classroom? Basically, just about any question or any discussion point would come back around to oppression of one sort or another by one group or another. While coding the transcriptions of the book study discussions, oppressive comments or stories appeared so frequently, that it would have been difficult to overlook. This particular theme came up very early in the discussion of chapter one. The theme of oppression from politicians first appeared when the discussion about the statistics Martin included in chapter one regarding the drastic changes in family structure.

From as late as 1960 the norm of a two parent household where father goes out to work and the mother stays home was 70% of American families. In just 26 years through 1986 only 7% of families consisted of a

two parent family with a male breadwinner and a female housewife with dependent children. (p. 6)

Reese surmised that women want to work because society didn't recognize home as a valid job. "It made it more worthwhile to go outside of home to get a job, a career. Reese made reference to the book and Martin's statement, "Home's continuing contributions to a child's development are both relied on by school and society and refused public recognition" (p. 6).

At that point the participants exchanged views on the rising expectations for even our very youngest students. They discussed the increased pressure to push unrealistic expectations and set standards that are not developmentally appropriate. Participant, Joan found it interesting that the developmental stages of children have not really changed but the expectation for students have changed enormously. Ann corroborated:

We haven't changed it [our expectations of students] that much. The powers that be [politicians and administration] are the ones that are doing that. They don't have any idea what they are doing. They are not experts on it. I tell people when they are fussing about public education, these children are doing things I never would have expected out of students when I first started teaching and they are masters at it. But maybe they lose some of their innocence and some of their childhood because we just work them to pieces.

Reese speculated on where the innocence and joy of coming to school gets lost because she added, it gets lost pretty early on. Ann equated the changes in

education that were brought forth in their discussions to the dark ages. She tied the most recent changes to No Child Left Behind. Joan interjected, "We are going to bring them [children] in, we are going to run them through the process and the finished product is going to pop out at grade twelve, like a widget."

The teacher participant's stories tell of another theme a dogged determination to make a difference in the lives of children in spite of these oppressive circumstances. Just sitting down to talk and listen with this group of teachers periodically over, an extended period gave me renewed hope that balance can be achieved in our education system. They are certainly not ready to be silenced. Again, I will expound on this idea further in the next chapter. Many of the stories they shared evidenced this theme. The participants began by discussing the other theorists Martin had made reference to in chapter one. They discussed Dewey, Montessori, and James. During the course of that conversation, Reese questioned about the theory that Martin was developing; she wasn't really sure what it was going to be. Reese stated, they [the theorists mentioned by Martin] were putting forth ideal cases and we don't live in an ideal world. Participant Joan concurred with this statement, "Her [Martin's] vision of home, it was very ideal and very middle class." Marie added that Martin wasn't just referring to children from impoverished circumstances but also included children from single parent homes and the need for more structure. Reese interjected and surmised that is the reason Martin had developed this theory to give children a foundation they may be missing out on, that children had when parents or at least the mom was there to rear the child.

I asked the participants if they see this as a problem with the children they teach when they are trying to educate their students in reading, writing, and mathematics. Ann, Reese, Renee, and Joan exclaimed that is absolutely what they are dealing with ever single day! Marie concurred, "The children come to school with more PROBLEMS, so we have to overcome those PROBLEMS before you can actually teach them." Reese also pointed out that we can't actually overcome those PROBLEMS because they stem from home and we can't fix home. She said we could foster the nurturing side of our culture or what we want them to do at school but we can't fix the home life. "I don't think we can fix all their PROBLEMS. We might be able to make a better environment for them while they are at school but they still have to go home." Joan concluded that maybe a daily modeling of a home environment, day after day after day, may be the best we could expect. Renee indicated that if we model for our students some alternative way of being, that maybe when they go out into the world or have their own family a difference would occur.

In response to one of the questions used to stimulate conversation, the discussion turned to this Dewey quote: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child that must the community want for all its children" (p. 40). I asked, "What do you think of this quote?" Several participants said that is the one thing they did remember about Dewey from their college preparation to become a teacher. Ann asked, "What did the wise parent want for their child from that era?" Then she answered her own question with: "to be a productive citizen, learn a trade; learn how to take care of themselves in the world." Joan

wondered, “Who is the best and wisest?” Reese added, “Did all the community have the same vision? All parents say they want the best for their children but then sometimes it is not provided in the home.” Joan and Reese agreed it [educational expectations] goes back to expectations or even valuing education. Reese stated:

I think that is why we get so many parents when we talk to them who are not responsive or they are very oppositional or defiant toward us. I’m not sure when you are calling them for support where that breakdown came from.

Joan shared her ideas on this Dewey quote as well, “It is just we all agree we want the very best for all our children, especially women because we are so nurturing.” Then she added, “Maybe men who come into education are a little more nurturing, as well.”

The critical analysis of the participants’ stories which led to the detection of these two additional themes was the impetus for exploring oppression and dogged determination to make a difference further. This exploration of oppression as it relates to all three oppressor groups will be included in chapter six. The theme of dogged determination to make a difference will also be analyzed and explained for its implication to this research. Chapter six begins with examples and discussion regarding the significance of these themes and how they answer the research questions of this dissertation. I will end with my conclusions and suggestions for research of further questions that may add to this body of knowledge.

## CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

*I know that the world is not filled with strangers.*

*It is full of other people—waiting only to be spoken to.*

Beth Day

### The Tipping Point – I Teach and by Teaching I Transform the World

Comment after comment, journal entry after journal entry, time and time again, story after story relating to the theme of oppression were recorded and transcribed. The prevalence of the theme concerning oppressive circumstances compelled me to re-visit *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This time Freire's (1997) words began to take on new relevance for me. I understood the meaning behind his theory of culture of silence and how it applied to the narratives collected from this group of research participants. The participant teachers' voices had been similarly silenced. I also understood that they needed to tell their individual stories, hear the others stories, and so doing found situational and experiential commonalities. Freire's (1997) theory on taking action also gained significance to this research. The participants began to call for some kind of action for change as they told and listened to the multitude of stories of oppression articulated. It's as if they did not even realize they had stories to tell until the telling began. The teacher participants would stop and revise the story before it was completely told thereby creating a new application. Their stories have been repressed because of lack of faith in self or lack of confidence in the value of their stories. The participants may not have

realized they had a story of significance until they began speaking about it and refining it in the process. Frequently the participants related they have been told what to think and do or chastised for thinking and doing on their own so often that they are afraid to speak out of turn much less take action. This theme was not only evidenced by their spoken words and journal entries, but additionally expressed by their body language, hand gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and repetitiveness. Through all their actions, they were striving to overcome their lack of faith in self and deficiency of confidence in the worth of their stories.

However, the participants, in my book study research, had many first hand experiences which they shared during our bi-weekly book study group meetings. The stories they so candidly shared revealed evidence of the thematic nature of their experiences as teachers in the realm of public school education. Unfortunately all of this knowledge and first hand experiential understanding is often suppressed or silenced completely by the powers that be such as, politicians, administrators, and parents.

Politicians who would make and pass unfunded mandates like the No Child Left Behind Act, possibly without ever having stepped so much as one foot in an inner-city school. While acting as a lobbyist, through my state teacher's association, at the state capitol, this very stark reality was supported by Gus Blackwell, Speaker Pro Tempore for the state House of Representatives. Representative Blackwell was speaking to the group of teacher lobbyists to encourage them in their efforts of requesting adequate

funding for education. He said, "Calls and emails have a cumulative effect. Come up and talk. They [the legislators] don't come to the capitol with all the answers. Speak what is on your mind. A lot of legislators have never been in a classroom."

The form of oppression dialogued most frequently involved administrators. Most often mentioned in their stories were the building principals who will not show support for discipline. Quite often they are too wrapped up in their administrative duties to really know what is going on in the classroom. Another commonly mentioned group of administrative oppressors were those that work at the district level including superintendents, area directors. This group also includes those appointed by their offices to provide leadership in their individual buildings.

Parents were also discussed with regularity when it came to oppressive stories or events shared during the group discussions. Parents include a broad general group of care-givers for students comprised of grandparents, aunts, great grandparents, foster parents, and daycare providers. Participants stories revealed lack of follow through with discipline or help with homework, both of which are vital to the success of our education system.

The voices of our teachers must not be suppressed or silenced they have their finger on the pulse of the classroom each and every school day. Let their voices ring loud and clear for they may be the very last hope of advocacy for the children. Each teacher spoke directly and honestly from their very heart. None were trying to point a finger of blame. They understand better than most



how important is to all pull toward a common goal, that which is best for the children. However, it is what it is or to borrow the words Ann used on several different occasions, “You get what you get.”

While coding the data collected one particular hot button issue, No Child Left Behind, was mentioned at one time or another in all six discussion sessions. All six participants made apparent by their stories that this act has unmistakably provided a set-back for the American educational system. Under NCLB each state is to develop and implement a statewide accountability system that is effective in ensuring that all local educational agencies, public elementary schools and public secondary schools make adequate yearly progress also known as AYP. State and local school districts will be held accountable for continuous and substantial academic improvement of all students based on academic achievement and assessments. Therein lays one of the main problems with this mandate imposed by our national government. An age of high-stakes testing has been created. School district leaders have created mandates which take away from many of the creative ways teachers inspired children to think and have replaced them with canned programs that have a script to follow. These narrowly scripted programs are very much in line with the “banking” concept of education described by Freire. “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 1997, p. 53). He continued, “But in the last

analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from praxis, individuals cannot be truly human” (p. 53).

Numerous accounts of pedagogical oppression were shared in each of the bi-weekly sessions. Additionally, this theme was expounded upon through journal entries made in response to the “Questions and Quotes” provided. Stories that lend further corroboration to the theme of dogged determination to make a difference were also told with great frequency. To re-iterate the themes developed as a result of the book study discussions, the following comments and stories have been included in this conclusion chapter.

The very youngest, pre-k and kindergarten students have not escaped this fervor for high-stakes testing. They are being assessed for reading and language arts by use of a computerized test, the BEAR. The participants reported that if the students don’t make a certain score, they are going to go into a reading sufficiency group. They children are going to be separated out and pointed out as not sufficient. Some participants were asked by their principals for input on whether their school should continue to use the BEAR or switch over to DIBBLES [another reading assessment]. While that may sound encouraging, none of them were given any information on DIBBLES so they don’t know anything about it in order to be able to form an opinion. Renee said her principal is talking about doing DIBBLES next year. Marie shared that her principal told her it takes 45 minutes of individual time to do the DIBBLES

nevertheless Marie wanted to know if it is a better screening tool. She shared these concerns about the BEAR assessment which is a computerized test taken by the students wearing headphones.

You don't know what they are asking them. You get a printout and you really don't know what area they didn't do well. It's sort of a broad general thing. To me the only thing it is useful for is to show growth. This is where they were at the beginning of the year. You've done all this teaching, teaching, teaching, teaching; this is where they are at the end of the year.

While the school where Ann teaches has never been on what the participants referred to as 'the bad list' for not making AYP, her school is really close. As a result they have been required by district and school administration to use SRA, a particularly scripted reading program. One of the district administrators made a site visit and told the staff that it [SRA] was not paying off like it should. Ann shared the visiting administrator's comments, "You all are just going to have to forget your favorite butterfly unit you have been teaching." Ann said, "I thought she was talking right to me." She wondered about teaching all the different cultures and other things because if she can only spend time teaching the mechanics of reading and math she won't be doing the experiential things. Marie responded, "I think if you allow a little more creativity from teachers, the kids would still get what they need." Reese interjected, "As soon as the nation realizes that maybe testing isn't the most important thing." Ann

also agreed, “We need to get rid of NCLB. We can go back to best practices that we know work like teaching reading from the chapter books.”

The teachers in this book study understand and lament the loss to their own sense of creativity as well as their students that has resulted from the NCLB mandates. Ann stated that the things we are doing in our classrooms now are kind of like the dark ages and we need a Renaissance. I followed up with the question, what would your Renaissance include? She replied, “Great Expectations is a solid foundation to build on. That would be a basic start for me. How to teach the learning brain through integrated thematic instruction and I really do believe we need to become more like the home.” Ann related that her first grade students are not allowed time for free play, free exploration or free reading because of the constant push for teaching reading and math. Joan, another first grade teacher, agreed and stated, “You are always just trying to get to the next thing and the next thing.” Reese, a pre-k teacher concurred, “We don’t have much time to do the cooperative groups, science, and social studies when so much emphasis is placed on reading and math.” She added:

As far as teaching those things like life skills, it is a vocabulary lesson.

This is the word. This is what it means. We don’t give them time to practice those things with free play and recess. It is all taken out of the curriculum. They don’t have time to practice those life skills for themselves, which I think is a lot of what the Schoolhome is about.

During a discussion of what their new vision of education would be, Marie stated, “What you have to have is people who understand and what we

don't have is people who understand, no support, no understanding, it seems they are just making things up as they go along." Joan agreed, "Right, they want it to be just like it used to be." Reese referred to another idea supported by Martin's book that education should be more experiential. She agreed with this idea that it shouldn't just be reading and math, rather what we call extra-curricular activities should be intertwined with the curriculum and not solely reserved for after school. Ann concurred with Reese, "Right, but as long as we have to do all that NCLB stuff how are we going to teach the other side of it?" In response to a quote Martin (1992), included by John Goodland, "One thing that is expected by parents is the safe care of their children and another is that they be seen as individuals" (p. 121) the participants shared their views. Reese cited NCLB as one of the chief deterrents to this ideal. She wrote this in her journal and shared it with the group:

The current state of [our] educational institution does not value individualism and expects all children regardless of talents, gifts, or disabilities to perform at the same minimum level of competency. With this act [NCLB] we are expecting all children to perform here, not to say they can't go further, but that is the expectation and that is what we are accountable for.

One of the main reasons Reese decided to move from teaching third grade to pre-k is the pressure of testing. She was required to focus on the benchmarks and could no longer use chapter books to teach reading and do the extra things. Reese said, "I was pretty much told you can't do that anymore.

You use this basal and it was not set up at the appropriate level for my students [who were on a higher level].” She described the basal reading series that she was required to use as very scripted. Marie, another pre-k teacher, said she felt pressured to stick with the district adopted reading and math program which took a lot of the joy out of her teaching experience. As a direct result of NCLB our district paid mega bucks for a very scripted banking model program called Target Teach. Joan shared how miserable she was last year with Target Teach. She said, “I thought, I can’t retire, I can’t do this again. What am I going to do?” It appears the district leaders have decided to back down on the strict use of this program in first grade, at least. Currently, second grade and beyond are still required to teach isolated facts in three week chunks and test on them at the end of each three week period. Joan confidently stated, “I know that by the end of the year my kids will know everything they need to know just not in that little three week chunk time-table.” One of the stories Isabella, who also teaches first grade, told about the scripted canned programs she is required to use was really quite poignant.

You know how we are drifting away from whole language and getting right in to what we have to do, what we have to do. We were reading a chart poem that teaches consonant, vowel, consonant, silent e. It is titled “I’ll Take My Family to the Lake.” You take them to the lake and you play outside and it’s sunny and it’s this and it’s that. One of my students raised her hand and asked, “Why are we reading this story when it is winter?”

Isabella said she has tried to pull in the winter and the penguins but here you are off to the lake. Marie agreed, "Yes, because right now we are talking about lady bugs and it is the dead of winter." Ann said, "See those people who are allocating the funds for us; they ought to know about this stuff. They ought to have to come to school and then they would know." Once again she brought up the question of what we were going to do to change our schools? Reese suggested throwing out the politicians and administrators. Joan shared a more passive view that she had written in her journal:

I just said at this time we can't because of NCLB and all of its requirements and if this could be a priority of education as a whole it could be included in teacher training so that teachers coming out of school could make a difference.

However, Marie shared a different thought with the group:

I think the only thing we can do is change ourselves. You can make time to do other things like a friend of mine who teaches fourth grade. She has to do Target Teach but she makes time to do experiential activities. When you make your whole focus Target Teach that is just off. You have to take time to do other things because Target Teach isn't out there [in the real world]. These other things she is teaching are out there in the world.

She told the group about a couple of different teaching in the moment activities she had experienced with her students just recently. "When it snowed, was that on my lesson plans? No, but we went outside they got to feel it, taste it, and

see it.” She told of another teachable moment which she could not pass up, “I read *The Gingerbread Baby* during reading and turned it into a math activity. The children were given gingerbread cookies and they graphed where you bit off first.” Joan agreed, “Exactly, a lot of times things come up because the kids ask questions and you do a little side bar thing.”

Sadly, the result from all this fervor to make AYP has not shown that the NCLB testing program has had a significant impact on student achievement. In October 2005, The National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], which is the only national testing program reported: “Reading achievement stayed about the same. Math scores, which have been rising for many years, rose some more, but more slowly than before NCLB took affect.” Why have state test scores shown big gains in a number of states while national scores stayed level? Daniel Koretz, Harvard University testing expert, has seen this before, and he explained it with one word: “Coaching.” Koretz said, “In the last few years, the situation has become absolutely egregious. They’re [administrators are] bringing in people from the outside to tell teachers what to skip, what to throw out” (NEA Today, April, 2007, p. 33).

There is, to a great extent, evidence of feelings of oppression by administrators at the district level, as well as, in their own schools. This, in spite of the fact, that the participant’s school district is pursuing The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Literally, this award is an act of congress. This Act may be cited as the “Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987” by the One Hundredth Congress of the United States of America.



This act was established to encourage American businesses and other organizations to practice effective quality control in the provision of their goods and services. It was enacted in response to the challenge by foreign competition to the productivity growth of the United States. “The leadership of the United States in product and process quality has been challenged strongly (and sometimes successfully) by foreign competition, and our Nation’s productivity growth has improved less than our competitors over the last two decades” (H.R. 812). This very prestigious award for business, education and health organizations is designed for organizations dedicated to performance excellence. One of the contiguous school districts earned this award in 2005. It is touted as a tool for self-assessment and developing an action plan. One very important premise of the award is to use a problem-solving approach based on the workers input. More of a bottom-up approach, as opposed to, the traditional top-down used by many organizations.

The award shall be given only to organizations which have made outstanding improvements in the quality of their goods or services (or both) and which demonstrated effective quality management through the training and involvement of all levels of personnel in quality improvement. (H. R. 812 – 3)

Sadly the participant’s stories tell a much different approach is being used. They recounted story after story that demonstrated how the thumb screws are being tightened by district administration. They shared how they are afraid to veer from the district mandated curriculum and take those

opportunities to teach in the moment. One participant told a story of her kindergarten children having their juice snack in tea cups which they washed up for themselves afterwards. Renee said:

But it takes them forever and again I am saying ‘hurry up, hurry up, we’ve got to go, hurry up. It seems like you are going to have to have time to do those domestic things that they love to do. Here I am saying “just swish, swish, swish and rinse it off.”

Ann commiserated, “You’ve got to go on to something else. Just think of how many of the life skills they used.” Reese agreed, “Wasn’t it more valuable than going on to a reading lesson for the time being? Yet, then you feel rushed because you know there are things that you have to do which are handed down from the district or state [administration].” The idea of their schools being compared based on AYP to those in middle to upper class neighborhoods and how insensible that was came up time after time. Ann said:

I got tired of hearing (the previous superintendent) at the beginning of every school year talking about what a wonderful job the teachers of those schools were doing and the rest of us are teaching our brains out. It is not a copout. It is not an excuse. You get what you get and that is what we are trying to teach.

Ann made this observation, “They [administrators] look at you and say what are those teachers doing over there. There have actually been administrators who have changed the whole staff around thinking that would solve the problem.” Again, she asked the question, “What are we going to do about it?” During

another discussion time, Reese said, "The district does not want to admit that there is a different population in different schools. They do not want to admit that population makes a difference. That the background of these children makes a difference in test scores." Reese found it hard to get any kind of support from administration especially for the pre-k program. She said, "They just don't really see us as a valuable part of the whole school program." Joan realized the importance and showed her support by these words, "Pre-k, that could help get these children started off on the right track." Reese agreed and reminded them of the research that has been conducted on the early childhood programs in our school district. She said, "The study was conducted by a team of researchers from Georgetown University. The published results corroborate the idea that pre-k programs do provide a definite head start for the children in this district." Reese has had administrators ask, "What you do with them all day?" She replied, "We teach them, we learn the alphabet letters, we learn the sounds, we learn number concepts. We have the exact same rules as the rest of the school. They even act better than some of the older kids." Joan told a story about her principal making a rather sudden decision to move some of the classes just that week past. She described it like fruit basket shake up, we are just going to toss it up. She said the principal did not offer to help with the move but instead chose to sit back and bark orders [at the teachers who were moving]. Isabella told a story about her principal telling Ms. Fields that she was going to teach first grade and that Ms. Ponder was going to be moved to the other side in order to teach in the upper grades. Isabella said, "It's like she [the

principal] tells things that are going to happen to people that don't need to know it. [The principal] needs to have a meeting and tell everybody.”

Another subject that repeatedly appeared in the discussions was that of no recess for the children, which has been dictated by administration. Reese stated:

We used to have time set aside for the Tribes [cooperative, inclusive learning method] activities and now we have everything, their lunchtime, their recess time has been shortened. We have pushed out time for developing those social skills. You have your two hour block of reading. Renee participated in a staff development program at her school site which the administrator had required the faculty members to attend. This is her story:

We had a professional development and the speaker said the students [pre-k and kindergarten] really needed two recesses, one just for free play and the other with a purpose. They also need a rest time too, to figure out what they have done so far. [These are] all things our principal said we don't need.

Yet another story about recess time being taken away was shared by Ann.

We haven't been able to go out on our playground all year. Our playground is in such bad shape, that bark and stuff, all the black lining is coming up and it is unsafe, so our principal won't let them go out. Our little babies have not had any recess all year. The principal said he has turned it in and they [district maintenance] are supposed to come out and fix it. That is outrageous!

She surmised it was the Instructional Facilitator [IF] in her building who was advocating no recess. She said, "There are a lot of people who think children already know how to play. They shouldn't go outside and play. I have heard our IF say that." Joan rejoined, "Yes, and please don't ask any questions. You get the look." This led to a discussion about the roles of the Instructional Facilitators in each school. Renee said, "Well she is supposed to come in and observe all the teachers and sit down with them and talk but she has never done it." Several agreed this was another position where district dollars were being seriously wasted. Isabella said they don't have anyone to check on them and see that they are doing their job. This comment led to a discussion on how tightly they are being monitored by their administrators. Ann asked, "Well, are you all still having walk throughs [inspections with a check list] all the time?" Ann's principal is in her room every three weeks and then he calls her into his office and goes over the little sheet. She took offense at his comment about the clutter in her room. She said:

It's not clutter! They came in and told us to cover all of our bookshelves with sheets and material and I am not doing it. All of my books and supplies are stacked neatly on the shelves. How can kids use them if you have them all covered up? I thought that was the stupidest thing and I am not doing it, so if they mark me down for clutter. You are supposed to have the materials out where you can see the kids are using them.

Isabella said they [the district administration] are big on clutter right now, "That must be the big focus because our principal is throwing away everything that is sitting on a shelf." Reese said her principal does curriculum walk throughs every three weeks. Joan sounded almost like a parrot describing her principal's walk throughs, "It is every three weeks, every three weeks." Ann expressed her doubt that her principal would know whether she was doing the right thing or not as he does his curriculum walk throughs. She said her principal fusses about the life skills word cards being posted on the classroom walls all the time. Other participants have been told that it is no longer necessary because the new superintendent has thrown the (city name) model out the window. Ann replied, "I have not received a directive on that. What do you mean the (city name) model is out? I would take mine down and put the kids work up there."

The participants were discussing a teacher [not in the study] who had asked her Sunday School class to pray for her because of the extreme stress she is feeling due to fighting in her school. Ann said the stress she is feeling can come from all kinds of things, not just the strain of the class but other factors like not having administrative support and parental support. This led to a story from Reese about three parents that have been banned from her school this year. She recounted, "The principal sent letters stating they may not come in our building because they are hitting things and screaming, cussing, and carrying on." Renee shared they had a couple of parents banned last year, one parent for saying she was going to kill a teacher. Marie commiserated with both Reese and Renee but she also felt for the children, "A lot of times the children

are hearing this and then they feel threatened because they like their teacher.” Reese added, “They are probably embarrassed that their mom is acting like this.” Many participants regret that they do not have the opportunity to meet and talk with their student’s parents face to face. Reese shared a story about a little boy who was exhibiting some extreme bullying behavior particularly toward girls which she described as more physical. She told about contacting his mother, “I have never met his mother. I have just talked to her many times on the telephone. We have a relationship. It is just not a face to face relationship.”

Ann shared this story:

I had a little mother write me a note the other day and you know I get very little interaction with the parents in my building. She wrote me this snotty little snippy letter, ‘When do you send homework home and all this stuff?’ I’m thinking it is February and you haven’t wondered where the homework was until now. Does she make sure her child’s homework is done; does she make sure she gets it back? No, so I guess it was just her day to vent on the teacher. I wrote her a note back and then she wondered why her daughter had not been checking out library books. We have been doing that so I don’t know, maybe we aren’t talking about the same child...It is so sad to think that you get so little interaction with the parents and then when you do it is like that.

Reese noted that parents of children of poverty don’t understand the importance of experiential learning. She said, “They are very big on pencil and paper. They want to see those worksheets.” Ann agreed, “Yes, our parents

want to see a lot of homework coming home, whether or not they do it and send it back.”

Feelings of we are all in the same boat – in this together – we have similar circumstances were expressed frequently. In addition, I heard a cry for action in the oft-repeated question: What are we going to do about it? Many of the stories shared included the theme of a dogged determination to make a difference. All of the participants shared accounts of attending staff development offerings in order to help refine their practice. Ann often told how her husband teases her for continuing to study different theorists on education. “Last summer I was reading Ruby Payne again. He knows I am close to retirement and he said, ‘Haven’t you just about learned or done everything that you are going to need.’ I said, ‘No, I learned some more stuff.” Frequently, I heard, “We are already doing the right thing by our students.” Even under these oppressive circumstances teachers want what is best for all their students. They understand the need for nurturing which is the heart of Compassionate Connectivity.

In chapter three of *The Schoolhome*, Martin (1992) included an account of anthropologist Nora Ellen Groce making a visit in 1978 to Martha’s Vineyard. According to Martin, Groce discovered that in one section of the Vineyard there were a number of deaf inhabitants and the hearing people were bilingual. “Instead of deaf citizens having to learn to negotiate the spoken language of the majority, or else resort to the written word, sign language was part of the



hearing majority's curriculum" (p. 51). Ann found the whole idea of the Martha's Vineyard account intriguing.

The whole thing to me was just awesome to think that they had made a way. Maybe that is what we need to do somehow; we've all done it anyway. We all adapt for those children who need it whether it is another language or another learning style.

Ann shared three stories about how she has made a way for three different students entrusted in her care this school year.

That little boy that we thought had Aspergers, he is so much better for me this year. He is very bright. His mom said, "You are the one that has made the difference." I know I am because he is not spitting on my floor anymore. He is not bugging the other kids all the time.

We all have our own time clock. I was trying to tell one of my fourth graders that I am tutoring in multiplication... He is at the point where he wants to be a big cool dude rather than let anyone know he doesn't know what he's doing. I tried to let him know it is okay if you haven't mastered this yet. You will, it doesn't mean you won't and don't worry about what everyone else is doing.

One little girl, I think she might be cleft pallet because she has a scar; I noticed her just sitting there doing nothing or just writing answers in. So I worked with her one on one and I said, "You do understand that

multiplication is just an easy way to add. It is just a fast way.” So she started looking at it and it was like a light bulb [turned] on and she said, “Oh, I can do this!” She really made me feel good because I thought – she got it! She even said, “Thank you for teaching me how to do multiplication.”

Ann brought up something she read in Martin’s book about the psychologist that wrote about his son walking down the street in Moscow and the “company of teenage boys” walking down the street toward him (p. 170). Ann related:

It was Urie Bronfenbrenner, he said, “If that happened with American teenagers we would be taking them to see a psychiatrist.” All these guys stopped and they tossed him [Bronfenbrenner’s son] around and they hugged him. They passed him around and acted as if they were thrilled. Our American kids, now-a-days would not do that.

The sharing of this story led to a lengthy discussion among the participants about the problems that abound in our middle schools. Ann expounded on this idea, “We have to start doing Middle School differently because that is where we start losing most of our kids. They need nurturing people. They still need phonics.” Reese concurred, “They still need nurturing and we think that they don’t. Yes, if they didn’t get phonics earlier on then maybe they will get it now.” Ann expressed her strong concern for the fifth grade students from her school not being adequately prepared for middle school. She wondered:

Why don't they ask the elementary teacher's who have had those children what they need? We throw those little babies in there and they go under. I look at some of our fifth graders today and I think what is going to happen to them next year?

Ann also questioned, "So how are we going to fix that?" Ann referred to some of the middle schools in this district as a wasteland. "You were so glad if they [my students] got to go to any of those magnet schools where you knew they were really going to get something instead of just this wasteland." Marie was of the same mind and described the current district policy of making too few schools acceptable by turning them into magnet schools a problem. She said, "That is the other problem – magnet schools. They all need to be on the same level. All students deserve the same educational opportunities and they are not getting that." Ann suggested, "They all need to be magnet!"

In order to search for connections in the narrative to the three Cs and my own theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity, I took another look at the theories of Noddings included in chapter two of this dissertation. Noddings (1992) envisioned a school system that embraces the notion that we must accept our students as individuals with different areas of strength. These strengths should be cultivated in an environment of caring and not the typical school environment of competition. It is my strong belief that by nature we are all caring individuals. When we demonstrate Compassionate Connectivity in our human interactions, we build trusting relationships. Continuing to encourage the children to feel connection, we build on this foundation of trust. Having a

trusting relationship with our students is essential in the production of just and compassionate behaviors. This connection reaffirms our sensitivity towards others and aids in transforming our schools and our world. These remarkable teachers and the stories they shared are important enough to voice and something significant learned from their willingness to see the happenings of their classrooms in a new light. I elicited the narratives of these participants to clarify the existence and meaning of my theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity. They shared many stories that validated the care, concern and connection experienced in their classrooms. In spite of the teacher participants oppressive circumstances, I detected little threads of thought, which pointed to the need for, if not the actual existence of, Compassionate Connectivity. Ann provided a lens for us to view her classroom environment.

Well, I think I would rather have learned in a classroom like mine than the one I grew up in. Even though, I think I felt secure and comfortable. But now I have bean bag chairs and reading lofts and small grouping and a wealth of materials and plants and lights; all of those things we have all come to know that make a safe and enticing learning environment. You can see it when they come in your room it is obvious. On the other hand, there were other freer times too because we were allowed to play outside a lot. I think about just the difference in that and interacting with other kids more.

She understands that children need authentic encounters with books not bits and pieces of reading which certain test prep programs provide. "Our librarian

wants books in those children's hands all the time. Really, that is what it is all about, it is not a reading series, not a workbook; it is sitting there and reading all day." Ann also understands the need for connection. "I have my desks pushed together in little pods of four so that maybe as they interact during their work they can at least have a little bit of a community." Marie shared her agreement with understanding the need for connection. "It is also neat to watch them if one is not getting it they can help each other. If we actually let them help out a little more, then those kids would also learn and not feel so pressured or not as smart." Ann responded, "We always continue to learn as much from them as they do from us, if we are perceptive to it." She continued:

The closer I come to retirement; I find I want to really enjoy my children. So living in the moment and really enjoying those little babies is very important to me. I can't imagine starting out a fall and not starting out with a group of children to teach reading to. It is just a privilege to serve and that is what we are doing is service.

Joan had this affirmation to share with the group:

After reading this [*The Schoolhome*], I do think we do try to provide the atmosphere that is homey with the plants, and the lights, and the little cloths that are soft, and the little tables... We do try to provide an atmosphere of a Schoolhome and a safe haven, a place to learn and grow. I think we do try to do this. Like you [Ann] were saying it sounded like Utopia. We wish it were the rule not the exception.

Ann responded, “I think that the Schoolhome needs to be developed even more because that is the only security some of them have.”

Stories of compassionate connectivity, with not only students but with their colleagues as well, were shared during our book study meetings. Ann told about giving money to their support personnel because they missed so many days during the ice storm and for those days would receive no pay. Some of the other participants said they did this at their schools also. They show compassion for causes and needs in the community as demonstrated by this story from Joan, “The other day, you know, our Pennies for Leukemia and Lymphoma, that letter, I thought okay I’m not looking up for a minute. An eight-year-old boy from Edmund wrote it.” The same program was presented at Isabella’s school and she said, “Yes that one got to me too.”

The participants’ conversations came around to the basic human need of connecting with other human beings whom we encounter in a meaningful way. Ann recognized a problem with an expectation she has for her first grade students. She said, “I know one thing I do is say, ‘You don’t have to put your hands on other people.’ Really, that probably is okay for little kids as long as they are not being [inappropriate].” Joan voiced her disagreement with something taught in a professional development training offered by the district. She shared:

If they hug me, I hug them back. Some thing we did, was it TRIBES, they said you go up to a child and you stand beside them and offer them, you know, whatever, instead of confronting them face to face and then if

they initiate it that's okay. If they are hugging me, then I am hugging them back. I don't care.

Reese vehemently concurred.

It goes against human nature not to touch. I went to a workshop not too long ago and the speaker was talking about there needs to be more touching. Because you don't get up and go into school and say, 'Good Morning! Don't touch me!' It is human nature. They need that comfort.

A touching experience that had just happened to Ann was another story shared:

Yesterday, I was at Wal-mart and I heard this little boy shouting. He was so delighted. It was a fifth grader, a very hard core fifth grader, who has really had troubles. But he was just so thrilled to see me and I thought that was just amazing. I thought this child was totally transformed. That has got to be the best. I don't know how people can survive without those kinds of things.

Similar to my experience of validation, the participants articulated, the reading of *The Schoolhome* encouraged them to see the worth in the things they do to show care and concern for their students. Ann expressed it like this, "With all the things I have learned and all of our staff developments that we have done, over the years, it is validating, in a way, because you think wait a minute I have already been doing that." Marie shared her thoughts about validation as well.

That is what I thought when we read the first chapter. It seems like we already have a home environment in our classroom. We try to make the

children feel safe and we try to make sure they are all included; that they are not feeling rejected or left out. My students always ask to go home with me. I feel validated and I feel I am doing the best I can for them right now. Last year, I might have put a little more pressure on myself. But, this year my focus is to have fun and enjoy. Not that I did not enjoy it last year I just felt more pressure. I had this reading program and this math program and I felt like I had to stick with that.

Ann again maintained, “I bought into a lot of this [Martin’s theories about a Schoolhome] and I want to see it happen. I do have this hope and this desire for things to be different.” She continued:

You know Martin pointed out in her book that American education does not have to change all at once, maybe just one classroom at a time which is what we are doing. This has been interesting. I just loved the whole concept of this book. I hope we can make it work and that we can get people who are receptive and interested.

Joan affirmed, “I heard a quote this morning, you have all heard it. I just really loved it! It was – Those who can do and those who believe others can teach!”

Reading *The Schoolhome* led me down a path of discovery about myself and the pedagogical practices that I had been subjected to as a child and also the ones I am subjecting my students to today. This reading and the continued study has transformed the way I view all aspects of education. I understand the importance of teaching reading from a new enlightened perspective. Reading that is taught merely for the sake of producing literate adults who can find



gainful employment should not be the final goal. Teaching another to read so that they may critically reflect on their world and the events in it so that necessary change may occur should be the aspiration of all educators. We are so busy telling our students to be quiet and just fill in the correct bubble; we have not offered them a way of knowing that will provide them with a voice for the future. In my quest for understanding, I wanted to know if other teachers would have a meaningful experience by reading this book. Clearly the narratives included in this dissertation point to that end. They have all had a meaningful experience, albeit one participant's meaning may be slightly different than another. What may have sparked a number of different ideas about their educative practice can take hold and perhaps fanned into a flame of consideration for change. Through their stories and comments each participant acknowledged they are willing to learn, from things they have read in Martin's book, a new way of being in their pedagogy.

## Exploring the Possibilities – Future Study

There are several questions that came to mind while writing this dissertation. These questions could lead to several ideas that could benefit from further study. What effects does oppression have on the learning environment in a classroom? What improvements are most necessary for creating an environment where teachers do not feel marginalized? This study consisted of teachers from schools comprised of students from extremely impoverished conditions. It might be enlightening to perform a comparable study including teachers from middle and upper class schools. The possibility that elementary education teachers who are male having a more nurturing nature was discussed on several occasions. How would a group of male early childhood teachers experience this set of readings? The participants of this book study research mentioned that middle schools should be revamped in order to better serve their students. How would a group of teachers for middle school or even older grades experience this set of readings?

## Implications

The findings of this qualitative research study cannot be generalized, but these teachers did experience these readings in ways similar to mine. They did feel validated in knowing that the things they were doing to show care, concern, and connection in their classrooms were critical to their teaching roles. While not enough substantiation was gleaned from our discussions to support my conjecture that Compassionate Connectivity does exist in other classrooms, there were little threads of similar thought woven throughout their stories.

Each of the participants told in their personal her-stories the effect that the culture of silence and oppression has had on their classrooms and on their own creative abilities. My research findings suggest that acts of power arbitrarily and unjustly imposed have resulted in tension, anger, emotional turmoil, and psychological stress equaling oppression for the teacher participants. Iria Marion Young (1991) in her book, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, defined oppression as a family of concepts and conditions. Young (1991) divided these concepts into five categories: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (p. 39). This study revealed elements of marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism were evident throughout the participants' stories. Only one of these elements need be present in order for a group to be defined as oppressed. Furthermore, every participant shared how parents, administrators, and politicians denied them their voice and decision making power. The changes

that must occur so that our district could and would deserve to earn the award they seek would include some of the following criteria:

- Organizations are encouraged to develop and demonstrate creative, adaptive, and flexible approaches for meeting requirements. Non-prescriptive requirements are intended to foster incremental and major (breakthrough) improvements, as well as basic change through innovation.
- A focus on common requirements, rather than on common procedures, fosters understanding, communication, sharing, alignment, and integration, while supporting innovation and diversity in approaches.
- The Education Criteria place a primary focus on teaching and learning because these are the principal goals of education organizations.
- Students are the key customers of education organizations, but their may be multiple stakeholders (e.g., parents, employers, other schools, and communities).
- Alignment in the criteria is built around connecting and reinforcing measures derived from your organization's process and strategy. These measures tie directly to student and stakeholder value and to overall performance. The use of measures thus channels different activities in consistent directions with less need for

detailed procedures, centralized decision making, or overly complex process management. (Baldrige, 2007)

In order to bring these changes about all educators must be willing to advance their journeys of self-actualization and devote themselves to social action. As they move from dehumanization to humanization they must be ever vigilant that they do not seek power to oppress (Freire, 1997). As teachers, we must begin to address the oppression and exploitation that society has used to shape and constrain our [aspirations and goals] through critical pedagogy (Wink, 2000). By incorporating critical pedagogy into our daily lives, we will be able to create the conditions necessary for both ourselves and our students to learn skills, knowledge, and modes of inquiry to critically examine the role society has played in our self-formation. The use of critical pedagogy will allow us to reject oppression and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. This journey to find our voice and discover the many faces oppression wears will be the impetus to regain our humanity and be instigators or restorers of children's humanity.

## Positing the Possibilities

As a result of this research, I hope for and question the possibilities. Will my kindergarten students remember me for typifying and encouraging the three Cs of care, concern, and connection or more importantly Compassionate Connectivity? That is the ultimate legacy I hope for my teaching career. I know I have taught my students many things that will serve as a strong foundation for future learning. I also know that the most powerful lessons are the ones learned through the seemingly mundane events of our day to day existence in the classroom. The times we sang with joy. The times we danced with abandon. The times we laughed with pure glee. The times we showed compassion because one of us hurt from a skinned knee or elbow. We shared our heart and our minds but more importantly we bared our souls to create bonds of Compassionate Connectivity.

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## Appendix A



*The University of Oklahoma*

OFFICE FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 11486  
Approval Date: October 31, 2006

October 31, 2006

Stephanie Holcomb  
4709 S. Knoxville Ave  
Tulsa, OK 74135

**RE: Going Beyond the Three C's: Creating a Classroom of "Compassionate Connectivity"**

Dear Ms. Holcomb:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. This study meets the criteria for expedited approval category 6, 7. It is my judgment as Chairperson of the IRB that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

IRB Application Dated: October 27, 2006 Revised  
Consent form - Subject Dated: October 25, 2006 Revised - Information Sheet for Consent  
Survey Instrument Dated: October 25, 2006 Schedule of Questions

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form. All study records, including copies of signed consent forms, must be retained for three (3) years after termination of the study.

The approval granted expires on October 30, 2007. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request an IRB Application for Continuing Review from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to [irb@ou.edu](mailto:irb@ou.edu).

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Laurette Taylor".

E. Laurette Taylor, Ph.D.  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

## Appendix B

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Stephanie Holcomb, and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Studies at the University of Oklahoma. I am requesting that you volunteer to participate in a research study titled *Going Beyond the Three C's: Creating a Classroom of Compassionate Connectivity*. You were selected as a possible participant because you were suggested by Pam Brooks the director of Early Childhood for Tulsa Public Schools. Please read this information sheet and contact me to ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to read and discuss a book by Jane Roland Martin, *The Schoolhome: Rethinking schools for changing families*, with other early childhood educators. I read this book as part of my studies to complete a PhD in Educational Studies. It was pivotal in changing the way I viewed aspects of my teaching day. I began to take a critical look at what seemed on the surface to be not important or rather mundane activities that occurred throughout the school day. These seemingly insignificant events began to take on a new relevance as an explanation for a transformation in our classroom environment. This transformation became the catalyst for my theoretical construct of Compassionate Connectivity. Reaffirming the three Cs from *The Schoolhome* by Compassionate Connectivity, is an example of a theoretical construct that gives classroom relationships new meaning and provides a catalyst for transforming our world. Compassionate Connectivity is the ability to imaginatively participate in another's emotions or feelings, in order to understand them better, thereby encouraging just and compassionate behaviors which allow acknowledgment of one another as essential components and exemplary elements of a greater humanity. Compassionate Connectivity takes relationships to be a primary building block of reality in the production of just and compassionate behaviors that reaffirms sensitivity towards others and aids in transforming schools. I plan to explore this phenomenon further with a study group of 7 to 8 early childhood educators. I wonder if you as part of this group of teachers will have a meaningful experience by participating in this research study. How will you experience this set of readings?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Provide Biographical information so that the characteristics of the sample can be explained in detail when the research is completed. This will be part of a face to face interview conducted individually -- approximate duration 30 minutes
2. Participate in a Personal History Interview which will possibly reveal underlying reasons for a decision or idea will be utilized throughout this research study. I will explore your own school experiences, as well as, reasons for becoming an educator. Face to face interview conducted individually - approximate duration 1 hour
3. Every two weeks for a total of 6 times (5 chapters and an epilogue) you will be asked to read a chapter which is approximately 40 pages long and keep a Personal Journal to jot down questions, thoughts, or relevant information that may occur while reading for the book study and working with children in your classroom. I will provide quotations for you to respond to in the journal and these responses will become a jumping off point for our group discussions during our bi-weekly meetings. Expected preparation time needed for reading and journal writing 1 hour per chapter

## Appendix B

4. Eight bi-weekly group meetings will be held for the purpose of discussing the readings as well as sharing experiences and ideas. Expected duration 2 hours

The study may have the following risk: Possible feeling of discomfort from sharing in front of a group of fellow educators. The benefits to participation are: The opportunity for you to meet with other early childhood educators to share ideas and discuss methods for improving the classroom environment. In addition your contributions to completing the research may offer others in the field valuable insight to improving their classroom environment with Compassionate Connectivity.

You will not be compensated for your time and participation in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time.

The records of this study will be kept private and your supervisor will not have access to your responses. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Research records will be stored securely. The group discussions will be audio-taped so that I may transcribe them at a later time. Transcription of the audio-taped meetings and all other research information and findings will be kept on my personal lap top computer. Audio tapes, my computer, and all other related written documents will be kept in a locked file drawer in my Study at home. Only approved researcher will have access to the records.

The researcher conducting this study, Stephanie Holcomb, can be contacted at 742-5369. My email address is home – [holcost@aim.com](mailto:holcost@aim.com) and school – [holcost@tulsaschools.org](mailto:holcost@tulsaschools.org). My advisor's name is Dr. Courtney Vaughn. Her phone number is (405)701-0555. Her email address is [vaughn1@ou.edu](mailto:vaughn1@ou.edu). You are encouraged to contact the researcher if you have any questions.

If you have any question about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU\_NC IRB) at (405)325-8110 or [irb@ou.edu](mailto:irb@ou.edu).

Please keep your copy of this information sheet for your records. By completing and returning a signed copy of this letter, I am agreeing to participate in this study.

### **Audio Taping of Study Activities:**

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews and group meetings may be recorded on an audio recording device. Participants have the right to refuse to allow such taping without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

- ☐ I consent to the use of audio recording.
- ☐ I do not consent to the use of audio recording.

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

---

Signature

---

Date

Appendix C  
Schedule of Questions

**Biographical Interview**

How old are you?

Where do you live? Please describe the type of community?

Please describe your household...husband...children...gender...ages?

What other family members are teachers?

How many years spent teaching?

Have you had any time off from teaching? If so, what were the reasons?

Please describe the schools where you have taught?

Please describe the student populations?

What things other than teaching are you involved with?

**Personal History Interview – as a student**

What impacted your decision to become a teacher?

Describe a teacher that has had an impact on your life? Please describe the impact?

Describe the best teacher you ever had?

Describe the worst teacher you ever had?

What were your most enjoyable school experiences?

What were your worst school experiences?

Tell me about your school experiences in general?

What about your experiences with classmates?

What about feelings of care, concern, and connection?

What early school experiences shaped your ideas of your own educative worthiness?

## Appendix C

### Schedule of Questions cont.

#### **Personal History Interview – as a teacher**

What is the most fulfilling part of your teaching experience?

What is the most discouraging part of your teaching experience?

How would an outsider looking in describe your classroom environment?

What are your teaching strengths?

What are your teaching weaknesses?

What can you tell me about the three Cs of care, concern and connection in your current classroom?

Anything else you want to share?

Appendix D

Chapter 1 (pages 5 – 48)

“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children.

John Dewey, *The School and Society*, 1899

1. How do you explain the John Dewey quote on page 40?
2. What do you perceive as Martin’s ideas of Dewey’s educational philosophy?
3. What do you perceive as Martin’s ideas of Montessori’s educational philosophy?
4. What do you perceive as Martin’s ideas of William James moral equivalent of war?
5. How would you describe a “moral equivalent of home in which children of all races, classes, and cultures feel at home”?



## Appendix D

### Questions and Quotes Chapter 2 (pages 49 – 84)

1. Is it possible to treasure the uniqueness of a whole range of perspectives without losing sight of commonalities?
2. Can a course of study be coherent when the lives and experiences of so many different kinds of people are included?
3. What do you think about the idea upheld by some people that restoring the American curriculum of the past is the best policy?
4. "...if American children do not all learn the same body of cultural facts they will not be able to participate in the activities that constitute culture with a small c,..." (an idea put forth by one educational critic, E.D. Hirsch, Jr.) What do you think?
5. "Although many of the great philosophers in the Western tradition -- Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, for instance have put forth views on the family, this topic was not included in course offerings in the past and rarely is even now." How often do you include this subject in your lessons? Should it be included? Why or why not?
6. Thinking back on your own education...how worthwhile do you feel what you were taught was?

## Appendix D

### Questions and Quotes Chapter 3 (pages 85 – 119)

1. What is your view on the idea that in the United States school is thought of as an instrument for developing children's minds, not their bodies; their thinking and reasoning skills, not their emotional capacities or active propensities?
2. Dewey told school people not to separate mind from body, thought from action, or reason from feeling and emotion. How do we do this? Can we do this and still satisfy those in power?
3. What are some things we as educators can do to encourage our students to be participants in life or society not just observers of it?
4. What strategies do you use for supplying students with different kinds of lenses for different occasions?
5. Have you had similar situations where the male students in your class or school have treated the female students in the demeaning fashion that was described in Section III of this chapter? At what age do you think this begins? As educators what can we do about it?

## Appendix D

### Questions and Quotes Chapter 4 (pages 120 – 160)

1. What is your view on this quote “One thing expected by parents is the safe care of their children and another is that they be seen as individuals...” (John Goodlad, 1984)
2. According to Rita Kramer’s biography of Montessori, William Heard Kilpatrick, an assistant professor of philosophy of education at Teachers College, Columbia University, launched a devastating attack on her ideas. What do you think motivated his censorship of Montessori?
3. What are some things we as educators can do to encourage our students to care for people in our immediate circle or classrooms and not just the different peoples of the world outside its doors?
4. Martin describes her three year experience teaching elementary school in this way, “as a public school teacher I was expected to subject my pupils to it (a curriculum that relies on memorizing facts and that is detached from real-life context)” What do you think about this statement?
5. To echo Martin’s question at the end of chapter four, “What radical change in school will suffice?”

## Appendix D

### Questions and Quotes Chapter 5 (pages 161 – 204)

1. How do you feel about the questions Martin asks: should education prepare children for the “real” world no matter how heartless it is, no matter how competitive and pugnacious? What about attempting to change the real world?
2. Does Martin’s use of one of the founding fathers’ objectives in framing the Constitution which was to insure domestic tranquility lend relevance to our classroom environment or school environment?
3. What are your thoughts on the following idea -- “What transpires in the halls and in the lunchroom may fall outside the standard school subjects, but its educational impact is not thereby diminished.”?
4. Martin suggested that in the Schoolhome, when one is teaching patterns of conduct, one is also teaching citizenship. How important do you see this idea of teaching conduct to be in your classroom?
5. Martin suggested, “Emerson seems to have been assuming that one can be a moral individual while systematically turning ones back on others.” What do you think?